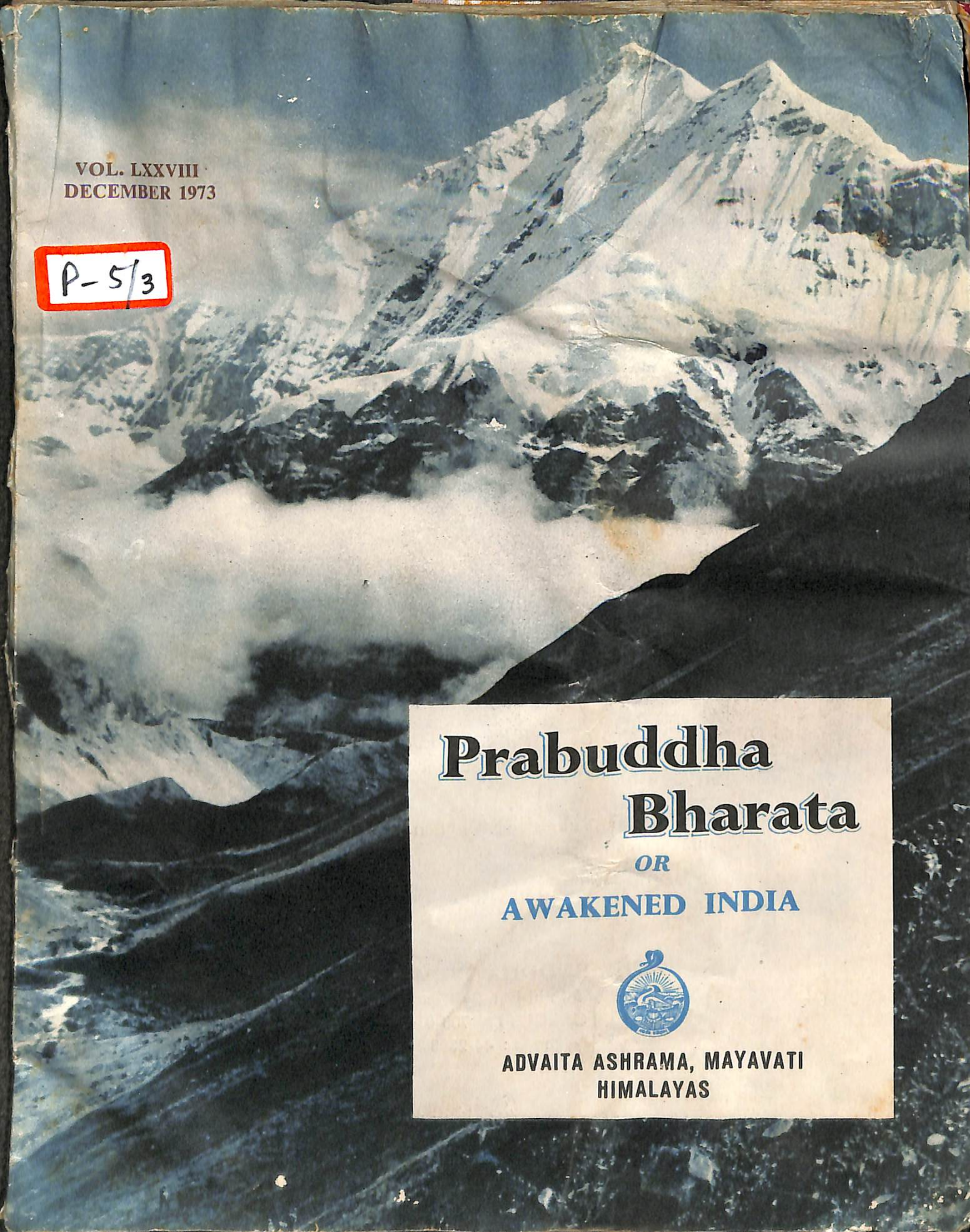


VOL. LXXVIII
DECEMBER 1973

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

DECEMBER 1973

CONTENTS

Cover:
Chauren Himal, Central Himalayas, Nepal.

Information for subscribers, contributors and publishers overleaf.

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700-014
Phone: 44-2898

Annual Subscription

India, Nepal, Bangladesh, & Sri Lanka Rs 8
U.S.A. $ 4.00
Other Countries £ 1.00

Life Subscription

Rs 150 $ 100 £ 20

Single Copy

75 P. 35 cents. 10 P.

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P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
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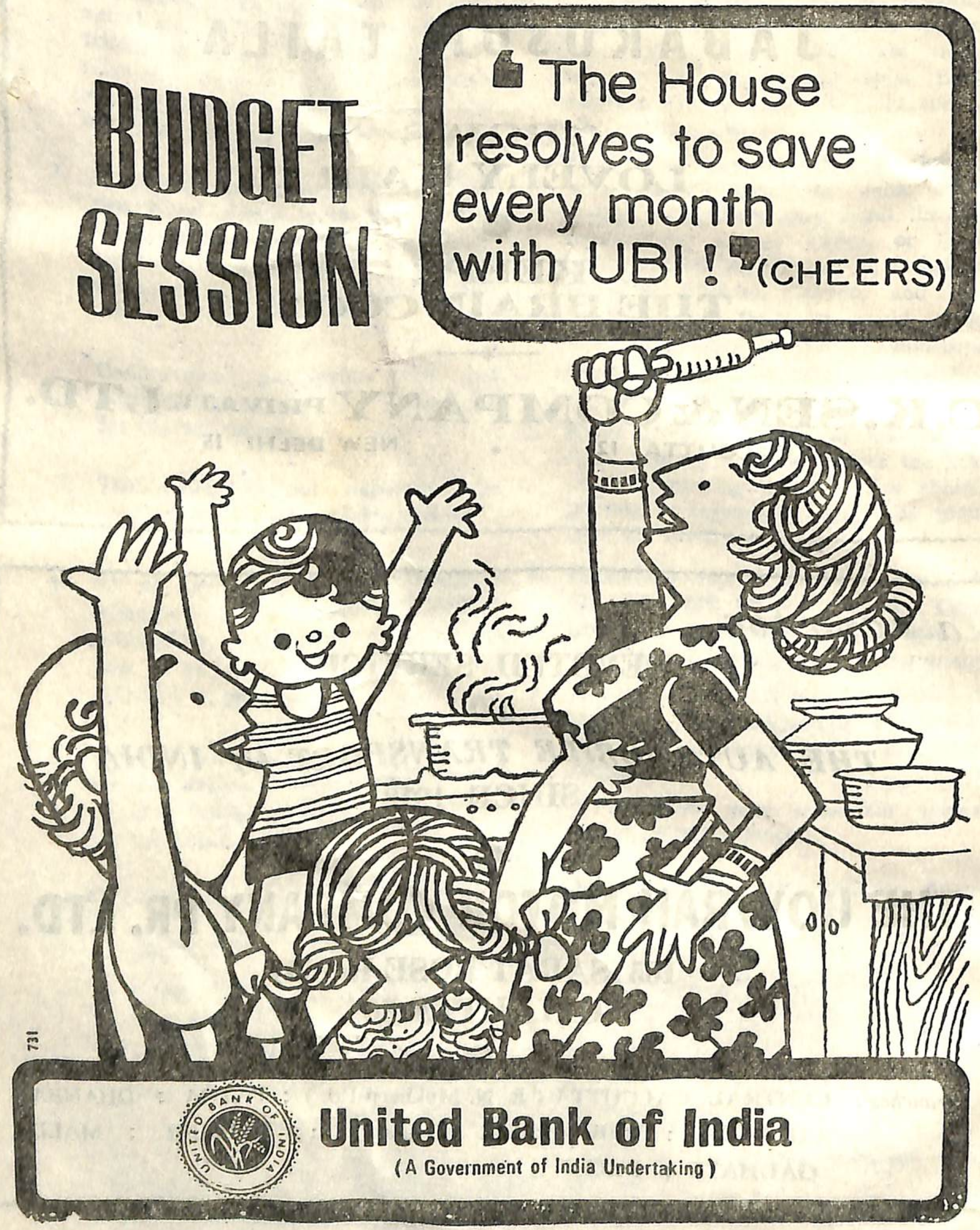
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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII DECEMBER 1973 No. 12

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is *reached.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Has God a form or is He formless ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'God has form and, again, He is formless. Once upon a time a sannyasi entered the temple of Jagannath. As he looked at the holy image he debated within himself whether God had form or was formless. He passed his staff from left to right to feel whether it touched the image. The staff touched nothing. He understood that there was no image before him; he concluded that God was formless. Next he passed the staff from right to left. It touched the image. The sannyasi understood that God had form. Thus he realized that God has form and, again, is formless.

'But it is extremely difficult to understand this. Naturally the doubt arises in the mind: if God is formless, how then can He have form? Further, if He has a form, why does He have so many forms ? '

Doctor Sarkar: 'God has created all these forms in the world; therefore He Himself has a form. Again, He has created the mind; therefore He is formless. It is possible for God to be everything.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'These things do not become clear until one has realized God. He assumes different forms and reveals Himself in different ways for the sake of His devotees. A man kept a solution of dye in a tub. Many people came to him to have their clothes dyed. He would ask a customer, "What colour should you like to have your cloth dyed ?" If the customer wanted red, then the man would dip the cloth in the tub and say, "Here is your cloth dyed red." If another customer wanted his cloth dyed yellow, the man would dip his cloth in the same tub and say, "Here is your cloth dyed yellow." If a customer wanted his cloth dyed blue, the man would dip it in the same tub and say, "Here is your cloth dyed blue." Thus he would dye the clothes of his customers different colours, dipping them all in the same solution. One of the customers watched all this with amazement. The man asked him, "Well ? What colour do you want for your cloth ? " The customer said, "Brother, dye my cloth the colour of the dye in your tub."

'Once a man went into a wood and saw a beautiful creature on a tree. Later he told a friend about it and said, "Brother, on a certain tree in the wood I saw a red-coloured creature." The friend answered: "I have seen it too. Why do you call it red? It is green." A third man said: "Oh, no, no! Why do you call it green? It is yellow." Then other persons began to describe the animal variously as violet, blue, or black. Soon they were quarrelling about the colour. At last they went to the tree and found a man sitting under it. In answer to their questions he said: "I live under this tree and know the creature very well. What each of you has said about it is true. Sometimes it is red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes blue, and so forth and so on. Again, sometimes I see that it has no colour whatsoever."

'Only he who constantly thinks of God can know His real nature. He alone knows that God reveals Himself in different forms and different ways, that He has attributes and, again, has none. Only the man who lives under the tree knows that the chameleon can assume various colours and that sometimes it remains colourless. Others, not knowing the whole truth, quarrel among themselves and suffer.

'Yes, God has form and, again, He has none. Do you know how it is? Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, is like a shoreless ocean. In the ocean visible blocks of ice are formed here and there by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to speak, of the bhakti of Its worshippers, the Infinite transforms Itself into the finite and appears before the worshipper as God with form. That is to say, God reveals Himself to His bhaktas as an embodied Person. Again, as, on the rising of the sun, the ice in the ocean melts away, so, on the awakening of jnana, the embodied God melts back into the infinite and formless Brahman.'

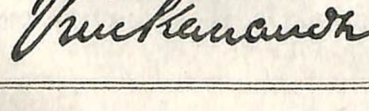
Doctor: 'Yes. When the sun is up, the ice melts; and what is more, the heat of the sun turns the water into invisible vapour.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Yes, that is true. As a result of the discrimination that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory, the aspirant goes into samadhi. Then, for him, the forms or attributes of God disappear altogether. Then he does not feel God to be a Person. Then he cannot describe in words what God is. And who will describe it? He who is to describe does not exist at all; he no longer finds his "I". To such a person Brahman is attributeless. In that state God is experienced only as Consciousness, by man's inmost consciousness. He cannot be comprehended by the mind and intelligence.

'Therefore people compare bhakti, love of God, to the cooling light of the moon, and jnana, knowledge, to the burning rays of the sun. I have heard that there are oceans in the extreme north and extreme south where the air is so cold that it freezes the water into huge blocks of ice here and there. Ships cannot move there; they are stopped by the ice.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

What right has a man to say he has a soul if he does not feel it, or that there is a God if he does not see Him? If there is a God we must see Him, if there is a soul we must perceive it; otherwise it is better not to believe. It is better to be an outspoken atheist than a hypocrite. The modern idea, on the one hand, with the 'learned', is that religion and metaphysics and all search after a Supreme Being are futile; on the other hand, with the semi-educated, the idea seems to be that these things really have no basis; their only value consists in the fact that they furnish strong motive powers for doing good to the world. If men believe in a God, they may become good, and moral, and so make good citizens. We cannot blame them for holding such ideas, seeing that all the teaching these men get is simply to believe in an eternal rigmarole of words, without any substance behind them. They are asked to live upon words; can they do it? If they could, I should not have the least regard for human nature. Man wants truth, wants to experience truth for himself; when he has grasped it, realised it, felt it within his heart of hearts, then alone, declare the Vedas, would all doubts vanish, all darkness be scattered, and all crookedness be made straight. 'Ye children of immortality, even those who live in the highest sphere, the way is found; there is a way out of all this darkness, and that is by perceiving Him who is beyond all darkness; there is no other way.'



THE HOLY MOTHER AND THE *BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ*

EDITORIAL

I

The first stanza of the traditional 'Meditation' on the *Bhagavad-gītā* personifies the holy book of eighteen chapters as the 'Goddess' who is our 'Mother'. It says that this spiritual Mother 'showers the immortal nectar of *advaitic* (nondualistic) wisdom' and 'destroys man's rebirth' in this mortal world. As the *Gītā's* teaching flowed forth from the lips of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and as the divine knowledge is inherent in and ever united with Him, the *Gītā* is *Bhagavatī* or the Goddess. Just as a mother patiently teaches her erring children and brings them up to be independent, the *Gītā* is always by our side to help and guide seekers until they attain spiritual independence. And so the *Gītā* is addressed as the 'Mother'. The *Gītā* undoubtedly accepts the individual souls, the universe of multiplicity, the personal God, and the need to realize Him. But all these concepts and teachings are laid out on the broadest base of Advaita or nondualism which is the keynote of the Upaniṣads. That was how the great advaitic teacher Śaṅkara could take up the *Gītā* as a text of Vedānta and write his brilliant commentary on it. A spiritual aspirant who practises the disciplines according to its teaching and becomes illumined must come to possess the advaitic vision. Therefore the *Gītā* is said to shower the ambrosia of nondualistic wisdom. And when a person realizes his oneness with Reality, he goes beyond birth and death. Thus the *Gītā* proves to be a destroyer of man's rebirth.

To those of our readers who are familiar with the biography of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother is no stranger. It is needless to say here anything about Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual struggles and realizations. He realized his oneness with God, and as he had utterly destroyed his egotism, declar-

ed that he was an incarnation of God in this modern age. He chose Sarada Devi—who later became the Holy Mother to all devotees of Sri Ramakrishna—as his spiritual helpmate and looked upon her as the Divine Mother, as his 'Śakti' (Power), as Saraswatī the Goddess of Wisdom, and pointed out his non-difference from her. As does the *Gītā*, the Holy Mother combined in herself the dual role of the Mother and the spiritual teacher. The humblest of women though she was, she unhesitatingly said on at least one occasion that she was *Bhagavatī*, the Divine Mother Herself. Her motherly love and patience knew no limits. She came to this world to bestow the highest wisdom which liberates man from the bondage of ignorance and rebirth. In her the highest advaitic wisdom, as reflected in the teachings of the *Gītā*, found fullest expression—she saw God in every creature and in the whole universe. Her last recorded teaching is a capsule of this wisdom. Anyone following her teachings and casting his or her life in the mould left by her will realize the ultimate truth and conquer death.

Swami Vivekananda once wrote to Sister Nivedita in a letter:

> 'Well, now great things are to be done! Who cares for great things? Why not do small things as well? One is as good as the other. The greatness of little things, that is what the *Gita* teaches—bless the old book!!'[1]

How appropriately has the Swami summarized the message of the *Gītā* here—'the greatness of little things'. He and his Master did great things indeed. (The world hardly knows that they did even small things with equal care and zest.) They impinge on our consciousness with immense glory and power. We are awestruck and dazzled when we hear or read about them. It is as if we were looking at the midday sun or the sky-scraping Himalayas. But the Holy Mother, in contrast, hardly impresses us at first. She is like the ocean, calm and deep. Who but an oceanographer with bathymetric data can tell us that the deepest part of the Pacific can easily engulf the tallest Himalayan peak, leaving 7,000 feet of water piled on it? Fortunately for us, Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples have given us unmistakable hints about the greatness of the Mother. Sri Ramakrishna, for instance, once warned his foolhardy nephew not to incur her displeasure. If he did, none would be able to shield him—not even he (Sri Ramakrishna). Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, once said of her, 'Inside, the great ocean of realization; outside, absolute calm.'[2] Swami Premananda, another of the foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, went a step further and said, 'We have seen that she had a much greater capacity than the Master. She was the embodiment of Power, and how well she controlled it! Sri Ramakrishna could not do so though he tried . . .'[3] Despite the highest honour accorded her by Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, she remained her simple, natural self—a housewife doing the simplest of duties and serving everyone, as a mother. Her life is an object-lesson of the *Gītā's* teaching—'the greatness of little things'. She practised and taught this great principle: 'One should not trifle with a thing, though it may be insignificant . . . . One should perform even insignificant work with respect.'

To devoted students of the Mother's life and teachings this parallelism with the *Gītā* is bound to suggest itself. God-centred, self-effacing, content with a behind-

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[1] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. VI (1963), p. 436.

[2] Swami Nikhilananda: *Holy Mother* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1963), p. 260.

[3] ibid, p. 261.

the-scenes role in the drama of Sri Ramakrishna's life, detached yet dedicated to humble, day-to-day duties, regarding all with an equal eye tinged by the collyrium of mother-love—she became the very embodiment of the ideal of the *Gītā*. The concluding verse of the eleventh chapter, commended by Śaṅkara as containing the essence of the whole book, precisely summarizes the life and personality of the Mother:

> 'He who does My work and looks on Me as the Supreme Goal, who is devoted to Me, who is without attachment and without hatred for any creature—he comes to Me, O Arjuna.'

II

One of the most fascinating features of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is its ability to meet the ordinary man at his level and slowly guide him up the spiritual ladder to perfection. Its doctrine of disinterested or dedicated action opens the gates of spiritual freedom to everyone. For man by nature is incurably active. He is active physically and mentally. But he acts selfishly and so gets bound. Bondage brings further action as the slave of nature. That slavery causes endless physical and mental suffering. The *Gītā* recognizes this great labyrinth in which human beings are trapped, and shows them a way out of it. This is not through giving up all works and duties and becoming a secluse. But it is while remaining in the swirl of action, to develop the spirit of detachment, trying to act as an instrument in the hands of that Cosmic Intelligence whose energy and will are manifest in every particle and thought—in short, 'to worship the Supreme with one's own duty'.

It is difficult to judge Sri Ramakrishna from our ordinary standpoint. For, as one of his monastic disciples said, every action of his, even his footfall, was not for himself but for others' good. Nevertheless he is open to the charge that he did not involve himself in worldly duties and through them realize God. He was a perfect renouncer, externally and internally, and his passion for God swept his soul like a tornado. No vestige of worldly interest or involvement could have survived that tornadolike longing. But the example of the Holy Mother is different. Even from her childhood, work and worldly duties surrounded her and kept her busy. Her coming to Dakshineswar to be by the side of her husband did not alter the tenor of her busy life. To her domestic duties such as cooking, serving, and cleaning were added the personal service to Sri Ramakrishna and feeding of his devotees. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna—that paragon of renouncers and ascetics—taught her how to do many small duties perfectly: how to roll the wick of an oil lamp, dress vegetables, and prepare betels! Of course, along with these he taught her how to meditate on God and all the intricacies of the inner life. She came to know the role she was to play in his mission, and accepted it cheerfully, discerningly. Never even once did she think of imitating Sri Ramakrishna, of becoming a 'Paramahaṁsī'! Thus she exemplifies the *Gītā's* teaching of accepting and discharging the duties that come to one on account of birth, nature, temperament, and station in life. Till her last days, even when her physical strength was failing, she went about her daily chores with zeal and dedication. By those who had little insight into her spirit of detachment, she was even criticized for worldly 'attachment'! Yet those same, or their friends, would as readily criticize Sri Ramakrishna for being 'otherworldly'. Strange are the ways in which the people of this world think and pass judgment! But luckily for humanity the men and women of God live their own lives according to the divine plan and

refuse to toe the line of the worldly-minded. Of course, the Mother was not deflected from her chosen way by the thoughtless egotistical remarks of surface-seeing persons.

Early in life, the Mother came to know this basic truth that 'it is indeed impossible for an embodied being to renounce action completely'.[4] When she came to Dakshineswar and under the tutelage of her divine husband, this conviction was reinforced. Sri Ramakrishna *not only* asked her to remain engaged in activity, but saw to it that her hands were kept busy. Later the Mother taught her disciples thus:

> 'One must always do some work. Only through work can one remove the bondage of work. Total detachment comes later. One should not be without work even for a moment. Work helps one to fend off idle thoughts. If one is without work such thoughts rush into one's mind.'[5]

When asked by a disciple why she did all kinds of work without accepting any assistance, she replied, 'My child, it is good to be active.' And then she added solemnly, 'Bless me that I may work as long as I live!'[6] At the time she said these words she had nothing to gain, materially or spiritually, through work. She worked only to set an example to others, in the spirit of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as pointed out in the *Gītā*.[7]

The Holy Mother worked steadily but her mind rested with God. Whether at Dakshineswar or elsewhere after the Master's passing, she combined intense serenity with intense activity. 'Remember Me and fight'; 'Surrendering all action to Me, with mind intent on the Self, freeing yourself from longing and selfishness, fight—unperturbed by grief,'[8]—she was a living illustration of these *Gītā* teachings. In her precepts to others, she asked them to combine work with interludes of meditation. She said:

> 'You should work, no doubt. Work saves the mind from going astray. But japa, prayer, and meditation are also necessary. You must sit for meditation at least once in the morning and once in the evening. That will be like the rudder of a boat . . . unless you practise meditation morning and evening, along with your work, how can you know whether you are doing the right thing or the wrong?'[9]

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

> 'As the ignorant act, attached to their work, O Arjuna, so should an enlightened man act, but without attachment, in order that he may set people on the right path.
> 'Let no enlightened man unsettle the understanding of the ignorant, who are attached to action. He should engage them in action, himself performing it with devotion.'[10]

This injunction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the wise was carried out literally by the Holy Mother. Seeing her immersed in the domestic affairs of her brothers and caring for the sisters-in-law, nieces, and other relatives—some of them forming a 'crew of absurdities'—a few devotees doubted whether she was an illumined soul at all! They compared her to her disadvantage with Sri Ramakrishna and his life of utter renunciation both internal and external, his God-intoxicated states and his soul-stirring religious talks. But who were these to subject her to any judgment? Did they possess any insight into Sri Ramakrishna's mind? Could they plumb the Mother's personality? What to speak of this—did they have any insight into their own minds? It is impossible for unenlightened people to have even the least inkling of the mind and personality of a saint, much less to pretend to measure those souls who come with a saving

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4 *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII. 11.
5 Nikhilananda: op. cit., p. 229.
6 loc. cit.
7 *Bhagavad-gītā*, III. 22-4.
8 ibid., VIII. 7; III. 30.
9 *Vide* Nikhilananda: op. cit., p. 220.
10 *Bhagavad-gītā*, III. 25-6.

mission on earth. However, it is possible for a saint to understand another saint. The foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who were all men of illumination, could understand the glory and greatness of the Holy Mother. One of them said:

> 'Many people worship her photograph. But in spite of her rheumatism she does not accept service from others. How tirelessly she serves the visitors at Jayrambati, known or unknown! She fetches water from the tank and even walks a mile to procure milk and good vegetables. Often she washes their dishes after meals.'
>
> 'She has set the example of how to lead an ideal life in the world. How nonattached she is in the midst of her manifold tasks! And never forget that she is the embodiment of the Divine Mother of the Universe.'[11]

This glorious example of the Holy Mother—doing whatever duty falls to one's share, however humble it be, with alacrity and dedication—is always needed by humanity. Especially is it so in present-day India where every dishwasher, truck-driver or soldier thinks that he is the most eligible person to become the country's Prime-minister, President, or Chief of Staff!

III

Samadarśana or same-sightedness, according to the *Gītā,* comes to one who realizes the Supreme Reality. Such a seer is never bereft of that unitary consciousness, both within and without. 'They have conquered relative existence even here.' avers the *Gītā,* 'for Brahman is untainted and is the same in all; therefore in Brahman they rest.'[12] The *Gītā* gives us wonderful glimpses of these sages in verses such as:

> 'The wise see the same in all—whether it be a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with learning and humility, or a cow or an elephant or a dog or an outcaste.'[13]

'In the fullness of one's spiritual realizations,' the Mother once said, 'one will find that he who resides in one's heart resides in the heart of others as well—the oppressed, the untouchable, and the outcaste. This realization makes one truly humble.' This fullness of realization had unlocked the floodgates of her Mother-heart, brimming with radiant love. She could never see others' defects. She had specially prayed and disciplined herself to be rid of fault-finding. This alone would have entitled her to the vision of sameness. But she was, besides, an ocean of spiritual realizations. In her eyes the saintliest persons were on a par with the sinful and the wicked. 'I am the Mother of the good and I am the Mother of the wicked', she once remarked. Against the background of her whole life and realization, her last message should not come as a surprise to anyone, '. . . No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.' She once said that her children were spread all over the world. 'Hers was an all-embracing Mother's heart,' wrote an American devotee who had met her, 'which wrapped itself in love about every child born of woman, and her family was the human race. . . .'[14]

Nor did her love stop at the limits of humanity. It extended to and embraced 'beasts, birds, and insects, as well'.[15] When a disciple asked her if she was the Mother of all, she unhesitatingly said, 'Yes, I am.' 'Even of those subhuman beings, birds and animals?' 'Yes, of those also.' Not only did she see them as her children, but she saw the Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, in all of them. It is said that towards the end she sometimes fed people—and even birds—from the food offering before the worship. Ordinarily

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11 Nikhilananda: op. cit., pp. 131-2.

12 *Bhagavad-gītā,* V. 19.

13 ibid., V. 18.

14 Nikhilananda: op. cit., p. 282.

15 ibid., p. 129.

this would be considered a sacrilegious act. But the Mother said, 'The Master alone dwells in you all.' Once she confided to a disciple:

> 'An ant crawled along and Radhu wanted to kill it. Do you know what I saw? I saw it was not an ant but the Master; I saw in it his hands, his feet, his face, his eyes. I stopped Radhi. I thought: The Master alone has become all. It would be right if I could look after all.'[16]

Don't we read in the *Gītā*:

> 'He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding alike in all beings, and not perishing when they perish—verily he alone sees. 'Because he sees the Lord present alike everywhere, he does not injure Self by self, and thus reaches the supreme state.'[17]

If she saw the Master present everywhere, it implies that she saw herself everywhere. Because she had merged and mingled her identity with him who had merged his identity in Brahman. The story of Radhu's pet cat is a beautiful illustration of the Mother's knowledge of nonduality. One day a monastic attendant, Brahmachari Jnan, treated the cat roughly and dashed it against the ground. The Mother looked pained and sad. She said to him, 'Scold the cat, but do not beat it. Please feed it regularly and see that it does not go to any other house to steal food.' Then she reminded him solemnly, 'Do not beat the cat. I dwell inside the cat too.'[18] This incident reminds one of Sri Ramakrishna, in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, feeding a cat with the food offering meant for the Goddess, having seen the Divine Mother in it.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Tie the nondual knowledge (*advaita-jñāna*) in the hem of your cloth and then do whatever you like.'[19] In the Holy Mother's life one can find the practical fulfilment of this teaching. Because this knowledge of nonduality was ever awake in her, she went beyond the social conventions, caste and racial prejudices, and the dualities of good and evil, holy and unholy, pure and impure. 'He who having been established in oneness, worships Me dwelling in all beings—that yogi, in whatever way he leads his life, lives in Me.'[20] People were surprised and sometimes shocked when she disregarded certain conventions and usages in initiating devotees into spiritual life. A period of mourning, for instance, is considered by the Hindus as unholy and therefore unsuitable for such auspicious ceremonies as worship, initiation, etc.; but the Mother waived such conventions, saying, 'There is no connection between the spirit and the body. The talk of defilement due to death is meaningless.' And she actually initiated persons during such periods. Nor would she mind nonbathing before initiation. She was not always bound by the rule of giving initiation in the shrine or chapel. To her, with the advaitic vision, all places were equally sacred. There are cases when she gave initiation on the veranda of her Calcutta residence, under the eaves of her village home, in an open meadow, in the precincts of a railway station, and while sitting in the shade of an umbrella and using for purification rain-water collected in small holes in the ground.

The Mother's knowledge of unity, and her constant awareness of the nondual Reality were on a par with that of the Great Master. We cite only one instance among others where this fact was fully revealed in spite of her efforts to hide it from devotees. One of her disciples, having noticed that she

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16 ibid., p. 190.

17 *Bhagavad-gītā*, XIII. 27-8.

18 Nikhilananda: op. cit., p. 164.

19 Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-4, 1952), p. 392.

20 *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 31.

was a vegetarian, gave up eating fish and flesh. When she pressed him to resume his old food habit, he referred to her own vegetarianism. The Mother replied: 'Do you think that I eat only through one mouth? Don't be foolish. I am asking you to eat fish and meat.'[21]

IV

All the 'divine treasures' (*daivī sampat*) that the *Gītā* speaks of were her inborn virtues. Under the guidance of Sri Ramakrishna and through her constant and tremendous spiritual practices she attained the heights of spiritual perfection depicted in the *Gītā* as the *sthita-prajña* (one of steady wisdom), *bhakta* (the ideal devotee), and *guṇātīta* (one who has transcended the three *guṇas*). It is not difficult for a person who has devotedly studied her life and also the group of characteristics mentioned by the *Gītā* under these three prototypes of perfection, to note the conformity between them. For fear of lengthening the essay, we content ourselves with giving only this indication.

V

A vedic mantra says that the sages always perceive the Supreme abode of Viṣṇu 'overspreading everything like an eye'. The Divine Mother is conceived as remaining always with Her eyes open. Śaṅkara, in a hymn to the Divine Mother, gives an ingenious explanation for this. He says that when She opens Her eyes, the whole universe comes into being, and when She closes them it disappears. With Her opening the eyes, this creation has come into being, and out of Her boundless love for it, She wants to protect it from destruction. So Her eyes are winkless! Swami Vivekananda's *Ambā-stotram* ('A Hymn to the Divine Mother') has a stanza to this effect:

> 'Your lotus-eyes are even on friend and foe. Your benign hand brings fruit to the fortunate and unfortunate alike. O Mother, both the shadow of death and immortality are Your grace. Mother Supreme, may Your auspicious eyes never leave me out of sight.'

Readers of the Holy Mother's life cannot fail to remember the touching scenes of her leave-takings from devotees and disciples. She often followed them some distance and usually kept on looking at the party till it was out of sight. Devotees of the Holy Mother do not want anything else from her—they only want that her gracious glances should always fall on them. The Master may close his eyes partly or fully; it does not matter much. But may the Holy Mother, seated on his left, always be looking at her children with unwinking eyes!

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21 Nikhilananda: op. cit., p. 302.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora
12.6.1916

Dear—,

. . . Here, too, rains have *set* in. People are saying that if it ceases for a few days it *will do* good. *But*, whatever it is, we should say that this rain *has saved*, as *it* were, the creation. The nuisance of leeches at Mayavati is indeed a frightening affair; but where forsooth is any trouble-free place? Some defect or other inheres in all places, all things, and all persons. Similarly in all works. 'For, all undertakings are covered with imperfection, as fire with smoke.'[1] That is why the Lord says: 'O Arjuna, one ought not to give up the work to which one is born, though it has its imperfections.'[2] Therefore he says again: 'Practising steadiness of mind, fix your heart, O Arjuna, constantly on Me.'[3] If that is done, then is an end of all evil.

One should accomplish this God-mindedness through constant practice. '. . . by long constant efforts with great love'[4]—if this happens, then you attain the goal. Nothing happens in a trice; to be at it steadfastly is the means. 'With repeated efforts, one day you will reach (the goal).' One should always stick to the Lord; if one succeeds in making this a habit, then the purpose is achieved. Then only the Lord is known to be present within and without; the cycle of events in the world cannot then disturb one's equanimity or make one restless. Not that disturbing things do not happen—they do, but they go as they come, without being able to affect us in any way.

Sufferings come to everyone. The *jñānī* (man of wisdom) remains unruffled, but the ignorant one becomes sorrowful—this much is the difference. The Lord will make everything straight for you all; those who have surrendered themselves to Him have no fear.

My sincere best wishes and love to you all.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI TURIYANANDA

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1 सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृता: । *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII. 48.

2 सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् । loc. cit.

3 बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्त: सततं भव । ibid., XVIII. 57

4 स तु दीर्घकाल-नैरन्तर्य-सत्कार-सेवित:... । Patañjali: *Yoga-sūtras*, I. 14.

OUR CHRIST

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

I

December 25th is one of the holiest days of the religious calendar of man. On this day Christ the Saviour was born. This day is celebrated all over the world by people of all races and colours, and Christ is worshipped in the language of the heart in various tongues.

In churches, monasteries, convents, homes, chancelleries, way-side inns, humble cottages, proud palaces, on distant hill-tops, in market-places, in lonely forests, on sailing ships—he is hymned with heart's devotion on this day. In Gregorian chants, in moving carols, the choirs all over the world sing his praise with full-throated inspiration.

In this vast worship on the advent of one of man's Saviours, we join our own.

'The Avatara is always one and the same. Having plunged into the ocean of life, the one God rises up at one point and is known as Krishna, and when after another plunge, He rises up at another point, He is known as Christ.'—says Sri Ramakrishna.[1]

It is perhaps not well known that the Ramakrishna movement has a profound mystical relation with Christ. Sri Ramakrishna had a vision of Christ with open eyes.

> 'The Son of Man embraced him and disappeared into his body and the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] entered into ecstasy, lost normal consciousness and remained identified for some time with the Omnipresent Brahman with attributes. Having thus attained the vision of Jesus, the Master became free from the slightest doubt about his being an incarnation of God.'[2]

This mystical experience of the identity of two God-men, no matter how any theologians may interpret it, testifies to the fact that the 'Avatara is always one and the same'. Moreover, the reauthentication of the Christ phenomenon in Sri Ramakrishna's experience, has not only revalidated the livingness of Christ, so near our time, but also enriched the Ramakrishna phenomenon with an upsurge of a divine spring from beneath the subsoil of time.

The explanation of why those who love Sri Ramakrishna cannot help loving Christ is to be sought in the former's experience of the living Christ and their mystical unity. So, those born Christians who had lost faith in Christ, after coming to Sri Ramakrishna for inspiration, are surprised to rediscover the lovableness of Christ. In this sense Sri Ramakrishna has been the augmenter of love for Christ, even in the West. Besides, to Ramakrishna's own followers Christ has always been a mine of living spiritual inspiration, perfectly in accord with Vedāntic tradition. Nay, to them Christ is a most marvellous exemplifier of the truth of Vedānta.

Maybe this was why, though seemingly accidentally, the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna took the vows of *sannyāsa* on Christmas Eve of 1886.[3] This coincidence was discovered only after the vows were taken, and it greatly pleased the young *sannyāsins* because they felt the spirit of Christ was identical with their aspiration.

Swami Vivekananda was a lifelong adorer of Christ. When he moved all over India as a wandering monk, and had hardly any possession, he carried with him a copy of

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1 *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1965), Saying No. 705.

2 Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1956), pp. 295-6.

3 Vide: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1965), pp. 159-160.

the *Bhagavad-gītā* and one of *The Imitation of Christ*, a part of which he had translated into Bengali. His wonderful devotion to Christ found touching expression when, being asked to bless a picture of the Sistine Madonna, he said: 'I to bless this portrait! Had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, I would have washed his feet, not with my tears, but with my heart's blood.'

The following words about one of Christ's teachings could have been said by the Evangelist apostle of Christ; but in fact they were uttered by Swami Vivekananda:

> 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. In that one sentence is the gist of all religions. If you have learnt that, all that has been said in the past, and all that it is possible to say in the future, you have known; you need not look into anything else, for you have all that is necessary in that one sentence; it could save the world were all the other scriptures lost.'[4]

Swami Vivekananda was not a sentimental person. Why did he then speak of Christ and his teaching in such superlatives? On the axis of the answer to this question we shall develop our theme. One thing is absolutely sure, that every word of what he said he meant. As we well know, Vivekananda is considered the greatest teacher of Vedānta in modern times. He had no separate existence from the ideal he lived and preached. If he bore that depth of devotion to Christ it was because Christ exemplified in his life and teachings the essentials of Vedānta.

It may not be so well remembered that Christianity came to India long before it went to Rome. We can thus say that Christ has been with us for at least nineteen centuries. Therefore we cannot be strangers to his teaching. We may even say that he was an Oriental; however, like all prophets he belongs to the whole world.

Born a carpenter at Nazareth, he possessed nothing. He claimed nothing for himself. He raised no armies. He fought no battles. He defeated none. No golden canopies were raised for him, no lamps were lit. No trumpets sounded. Silently, meekly, lovingly he reared an indomitable spirit and displayed the character of an independent seeker after truth and its seer and teacher. His inquiring mind insisted upon distilling the time-worn dogmas through faith and reason. By the age of twelve he was already in deep discussions with the learned men of Jerusalem so that 'all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers'.[5]

What was the secret of the adoration he received from the multitudes and has been receiving all over the world all these centuries? He radiated love and grace. He represented the very essence of Vedānta; and down the ages it has been developed—this Vedāntic ideal, right down to this day. And what was the basis? The basis was and is: God is the supreme fact, and that fact of God is propounded by Vedānta in a way that has gripped thinking minds throughout the ages and to this day.

Sri Ramakrishna had realized the truth of God and in that found the identity of soul and God. When he practised the disciplines of faiths other than Hinduism, he arrived at the same conclusion. 'Reality is One: Sages call it by various names.' 'As many faiths, so many paths.' When all is said and done, the ultimate fact remains—the fact of God. Around that fact has revolved and evolved all thinking, all prayer, all culture, all civilization.

In his bare thirty-nine years, Vivekananda never wearied of teaching this ideal of

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[4] Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. IV (1963), p. 26.

[5] Luke, 2. 46-47.

Vedānta in two words: Renunciation and Service. Renunciation meant a deliberate, constant movement of mind and spirit towards the purest state of being. Those things which one wants and grabs and clings to in the formative years with such zest, those very things are relinquished and put aside more or less rapidly as years advance. They become of little importance. That must mean advance towards perfection. That involves renunciation. Let us move on towards this and help others on this glorious path; and doing this is service of the highest order.

Christ in his thirty-three years of life had blazed this path. He exemplified both renunciation and service in the highest degree. He followed these two principles to the end—that end was sacrifice. The highest and best law in the universe is the law of sacrifice. That is the life-blood of humanity. That lays bare the vital truth of living in the Universal Spirit. Even the Supreme Spirit sacrificed Itself. In the *Ṛgveda* (X. 90) there is the hymn on the Supreme Being and the creation of the universe out of That, set forth as a sacrifice on the part of the Supreme Being. The greatest power in the universe is the power of total self-giving. And this the Christ represented to an amazing degree. He will always remain one of the mightiest wonders of the world. The blood on the Cross never dries up, for Christ's self-giving was not to time but to eternity.

When you boil down all the yogas, they come to mean attainment of spiritual illumination through *citta-śuddhi*—purification of the mind. All our paths of *sādhanā* (spiritual striving) lead to this *citta-śuddhi*, which *ipso facto* leads one to realization of the Supreme. That is the highest teaching of Vedānta. Christ represented in his life and work this highest teaching. His message is his life and his sacrifice. Reading the Bible reverently one feels the intensity and the immensity of the life of Christ, though in terms of years it was a very short life. In him the divinity was fully evolved.

What strikes us as the most arresting qualities of Christ are: his ethical and moral perfection, his constant communion with God, his unending service to men, and his supreme self-giving for the redemption of man.

His teachings, like himself, are extremely simple:

> 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'[6]
> 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'[7]
> 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon'.[8]

The spiritual imperatives taught by him are crystal clear:

> 'Have faith in God'[9]—for God exists.
> 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'[10]
> 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'[11]
> 'Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'[12]
> 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...'[13]
> 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'[14]
> 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'[15]
> 'Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.'[16]
> 'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.'[17]
> 'What things soever ye desire, when ye

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6 Matt., 22.37.
7 ibid., 22.39.
8 ibid., 6.24.
9 Mark, 11.22.
10 Matt., 4.10.
11 ibid., 4.17.
12 Luke, 17.21.
13 Matt., 6.33.
14 Luke, 11.9.
15 Matt., 7.1.
16 Mark, 13.33.
17 Mark, 14.38.

pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'[18]
'And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.'[19]
'...When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'[20]

As implied by Swami Vivekananda in the passage we have quoted, Christ's entire teaching may be summarized in the single saying: 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'[21] The entire business of spiritual life is to be pure in heart and see God. Christ opened the direct way from man to man's own God.

And he taught men:

'Ye are the salt of the earth....
'Ye are the light of the world...'
'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'[22]

Thus he emphasizes, in complete harmony with Vedāntic ideals, man's divine potential and perfectibility.

II

When in his thirtieth year Jesus went to John the Baptist for baptism, John cried, 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?'[23] Himself a great ascetic and prophet, John had often foretold Jesus' coming,—one 'whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'[24] Less than three years later John was beheaded, and a few months thereafter Christ was crucified.

During his short lifetime, not a moment did Christ spend for his own comfort and wellbeing. He worked at a carpenter's bench, wore the dress of a village peasant, and was content with the frugal meals of the poor. How different life becomes if this example is followed: how much simpler, fuller, richer, freer! A perfect example of irreducible simplicity.

Our religious lore is rich with the sayings and teachings of sages risen from amongst the common people and of the people. They were weavers and carpenters and shoemakers and farmers, and even butchers by profession. Prophets and apostles have all called for simplicity in outward adornment and also simplicity of mind. The true adornment is the adornment of God's truth. This simplicity of mind and heart, this childlike freedom from guile characterized the life of Jesus. Like all other messengers of God he had one single aim in life: to do the will of God, to be absolutely loyal to His Truth, however great the cost. Life becomes simplified when there is a full commitment to God's will. This may mean misunderstanding, malignment, trials, sacrifice and even death, but it gives a deep sense of peace and security in the face of terror and tribulation.

History is strewn with such sacrifices of saints and prophets, but the world has yet to learn the lesson of the Cross. Most human beings have yet to know how to lead the simpler, fuller and freer life that these sacrifices made possible.

The human family keeps on approaching a historic crisis, and the world's problems appear more and more intractable. Crime, poverty, greed, violence and war, sensuality, dirt, disease, and pollution are all getting out of control. It is only a world Messiah that can slow down the swift pace towards annihilation. That Messiah need not be looked for in the wildernesses or deserts. He has to be discovered in every heart. Unless science takes into account ethics, and technology and religion march hand in

[18] ibid., 11.24.
[19] ibid., 11.25.
[20] Matt., 6.6.
[21] ibid., 5.8.
[22] ibid., 5.13, 14, 48.
[23] ibid., 3.14.
[24] John, 1.27, 30.

hand, there is no stopping of the inexorable drift towards disaster. Ruin can be averted only if self-interest gives place to service, and man looks upon his brother, his neighbour as his very own self. Oneness of Existence and of God, Divinity of Man—these were cardinal teachings of Vedānta and these had been also taught by Christ. If no heed is given them, there will be no room for fellow-feeling in a world of multiplicity, governed either by selfish human laws or lifeless natural laws.

Christ taught that unless our pride, self-sufficiency and ego leave us, we cannot know God. And that applies both to individuals and to nations. How beautiful and wondrous was the life of Jesus, for he lived it entirely in God. The touch of God which is His grace makes life meaningful. We have ignored the fact of God and so life seems stupid, absurd, and meaningless. There has to be childlike faith and trust if we would rediscover meaning and be blessed and blissful. All our arid modernity without purity of heart, and senseless knowledge without humility of spirit, have brought us near the precipice and threaten a push to unmitigated doom. But the last moment is not yet, if we will return to simplicity of heart. There is none so much against us in the universe as we ourselves. Instead of becoming our own killers, why not we decide to become our own saviours? Jesus told us the whole secret: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'[25]

The holy spirit in Christ worked incessantly and keeps on working. Through much labour and in many ways he tried to reveal the divine Grace. The nights he spent in prayer. The days he spent serving the people, alleviating their pain and sorrow, curing the maimed, giving vision to the blind, water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, and spiritual inspiration to the seekers. He uplifted, he healed, he performed what are called miracles. But these were not miracles for him. They were the manifestations of his intense faith and love, his deep pity, his overwhelming reliance on God. Through the movements of his hands, the wishes of his mind, the words he spoke, God worked *on earth*. He had no existence separate from his *Father in Heaven*. No doubt, the Christ of the time was crucified but out of that arose the magnificent Christ of eternity.

The life of Christ is itself his message. Though not many details are known of that life, yet he is a tremendous living presence all over the world. He embodies gloriously in his life the abiding principles of Vedānta. As we have already shown, by total self-giving for the redemption of others he became the channel of the highest law in the universe—love of God for men. His compassion knew no reason or bounds. But for this divine compassion passing through Christ to men, a good part of the world would be in darkness. Not that the world is not so, just now. But then, that is no fault of God, but of masses of men and women who refuse to open their eyes to the light beating on their eyelids. Christ said: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.'[26] This is the promise of God to men through Christ, who is the messenger of divine promise.

III

As is generally surmised, his whole public ministry was compressed into a brief three years. Near the start thereof, was recorded the great Sermon on the Mount

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25 Matt., 18.3.

26 Revelation, 3.20.

which presents all the basic truths of Religion. He first taught his disciples how to pray and to live the life, and gave them power. Then he sent them forth to preach. He blessed little children. He warned the guilty. On sinners he showed his compassion, but for hypocrites he had no mercy. The source of all the power of Christ was his unbroken communion with the Lord.

More than anything else, he uplifted men from the slough of despond. The times were full of violence and terror, of arrogance and hatred. The excesses of Roman oppression; the cruelty of the rich—Roman or Jew—towards the poor, and the system of usurious money-lending; the pride of wealth and/or power, especially among the priesthood; and the frequent bitterness of religious persecution—these were eating into the nation's vitals. To change all this by bringing to light the core of the essential religion was Christ's mission. The priestly class, entrenched in power, felt threatened by his divine work. For he was undermining their prestige and authority by transplanting the authority of God into the hearts of humble men and women. The priests did at last succeed in getting him crucified on false charges. But they could crucify his body, not his spirit. 'What is Truth?' asked the jesting Pilate; and he did not tarry for the answer. For Christ represented Truth. His whole life was a life of absolute truth, holiness, selflessness and love. He was the 'suffering servant' of God and man. Wherever he went he was followed by multitudes as their saviour. All their dreams, their hopes rested in him. They were downtrodden and he made them stand up, stand up to inequity and injustice. These common folk, despised by the intellectuals and the priests, came to him from every quarter and heard him with wonder and gladness. They were astonished at his teaching.[27] It was so simple, yet authoritative, so different from the long complicated discourses of the scribes. Though his message was profound, he used simple homely language, interspersed with fascinating parables. The illustrations were so familiar that even the most illiterate peasant could follow. Brimful of compassion, he offered first what was needed—redemption. He wanted to free them from fear and evil; he endeavoured to rescue them from the slavery to wrong dogmas, and to reclaim their souls, lost in the smoke of worldly misery. He gave them hope. His attempt was to free them from the crushing yoke of man-made laws that no longer followed truth. He invited all who were oppressed, tired and disheartened:

> 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
> 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
> 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'[28]

His yoke was that of truth which made people free. Hence it was light.

If only we knew the truth about God and His laws, we would find that His yoke is easy and His burden light, for then we are strengthened by His power. And we inherit this power through belonging to Him—that is, through faith. This was why he asked for faith. Faith does not abolish law. It establishes it and burnishes it by focusing the light of right perception. For this purpose he blazoned the fact of God. Salvation is a factual adventure, a disengagement from comfortable and corrupting illusions.

The fact of God is denied by many of us,

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27 Cf.: Matt., 7. 28-29. '... The people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'

28 Matt., 11.28-30.

consciously or unconsciously. There are others, who would believe if only they could find a basis for such a faith. Swami Vivekananda, before he came to Sri Ramakrishna, was not sure of God's existence. But Sri Ramakrishna said: 'I have seen God. I *see* Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you.' Sri Ramakrishna taught that God could not be won by a system of ritual, but only by love and sincerity. Similarly Christ taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; it is within you. None can lead you to freedom through further tightening of your bondage. You must have *citta-śuddhi*—purification of the mind—to realize the freedom of the Self. In one sense this self-realization is the realization of the Fact of God.

Christ preached tirelessly: Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength. Why did he do so? For, 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men.'[29] All of us seek life and seek it in abundance. But all our life-seeking leads us inexorably to death. We frantically fly death, but death grins everywhere. Christ brings us the eternal answer to our perpetual seeking of life. If you seek life, avoid God-avoidance. In the negation of Him is death. Look around in the world and see that all actions which are not God-rooted but life-dreaming, necessarily lead to stark death.

Foolish men frothily talk of life, but all the time invent engines of death, as if they were its bondslaves. They starve millions so that they may fill their arsenals with hideous killers. And they even call that very occupation 'progress', little knowing that those who plan death for others are already death-devoured. Their civilization is but the satanic empire of the living dead.

[29] John, 1.4.

Christ warned men to turn away from death-sowing. He personified Life, preached Life that never decays, is never overpowered by death. You can feel the powerful, authentic, reassuring ring of his voice in his life-affirming words:

> 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.[30]

> 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'[31]

There is no life but in God—not in a hypocrite's idol called 'god', but the God whom Christ *revealed*.

He said:

> 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?'[32]

Did not Christ know that we need all these things? He knew, better than we. He was a realist, superior to crass materialists, and he was *sure* that 'your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things'.[33] So he preached a brave realism in which God is the central truth and 'thy neighbour' is 'thyself'. So he invited mankind to 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'.[34]

Again, not only did he say 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'[35] but he went further:

> 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy."

> 'But I say unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

[30] ibid., 10.10.
[31] ibid., 14.6.
[32] Matt., 6.25.
[33] ibid., 6.32.
[34] ibid., 6.33.
[35] ibid., 19.19.

'"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."'[36]

That was a great teaching, for it invoked love even for the 'enemy' who was persecuting and hurting one. Who is the enemy? The one born of your ignorance of the fact that there is naught but thy Self in the universe. Whom you strike, abandon, *kill*, is yourself tortured, abandoned, killed. Cease to see the 'other' and you have a world in which you need take no thought of the morrow. Unless you have boldness to take Christ's philosophy of life in its grand totality, you cannot discover its rational viability and profound practicality. Man frantically seeks sanction for being ego-centred, and so all philosophy must revolve on the axis of his sordid selfishness. But Christ gave man a cosmo-centered philosophy and ethics, which are squarely based on timeless Vedānta. He taught that if anyone had done any good or evil to anyone, friend or foe, he had done that unto himself (that is, God).[37] Wasn't this also proclaimed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *Vedānta-kṛt* (teacher of Vedānta) in the *Gītā*, many centuries earlier? 'He who judges of pleasure and pain everywhere, by the same standard as he applies to himself, that yogī, O Arjuna, is regarded as the highest.'[38] It is wonderful to think how the same truths have been adumbrated again and again in such times as called for their re-enunciation. The whole doctrine of Christ was current before him in the soul of the Orient, and especially seminated by the scriptures of India—the Upaniṣads, which laid the foundations of Vedānta.

Jesus translated passive justice into active love, the love that showed itself in selfless service. Of that selflessness the *Gītā* has spoken again and again. This 'selflessness' is nothing but loyalty to the true Self. When all the external things are shed, when the external shell is broken, a great ocean of love-consciousness swells up.

IV

Contrary to what victims of nescience think and claim we do not really live in a progressive world, we live in a changing world in a relative sense. In an absolute sense, you cannot transform the ever-changing world, but you can change yourself, and when you have done that, the whole world changes for the better as far as you are concerned. That is a scientific truth. From 'love thy neighbour as thyself' arise all the social and political obligations—all the verities of life. Righteousness alone is not enough. The bread of justice must be buttered with love.

All our sages have said in essence: Replace your conventions with convictions—the convictions of justice, compassion, love, peace. All are brothers, interdependent children of the same Father. Like Christ, all great teachers taught forgiveness. There can be no spiritual progress, nay not even social progress if we do not forgive. Stint not to forgive others, for if you are not forgiven your transgressions, you just cannot live. So Christ taught:

'Judge not, that ye be not judged.

'For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'[39]

Christ laid the greatest emphasis on prayer as a means of direct communion with the listening God, the anxious God, the waiting God. But he also pressed for the right kind of prayer. He warned against prayer '...as the hypocrites...in the cor-

36 ibid., 5.43-45.

37 *Vide* Matt., 25. 34-46.

38 *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 32.

39 Matt., 7.1-2.

ners of the streets, that they may be seen of men', and prayers from the throat—'vain repetitions'.[40] He taught secret prayers of the heart, in the cultivated presence of God. And he assured us that the Lord listens to our prayers. As Sri Ramakrishna said: The Lord hears the ant's footfalls; will He not listen to our prayer? The problem is not of unanswered prayers but of answered prayers. For He will surely give and give and give. So ask with great care and discrimination. For we may ask for things which become a millstone around our necks; we may be granted something which may prove our undoing. So pray with care. Praying is your job, said a Sufi saint. It is the job of the Almighty to grant your prayer or not. For He knows what is best for you. In His great wisdom He denies many things asked for, the things that would be the undoing of the asker.

Humility was taught by Jesus through his own example. He washed the feet of his disciples. Thus he glorified man, for 'Ye are the light of the world'. That is God's homage to man. When one falls at the Lord's feet with utter humility, He lifts up one to his bosom. He called for simplicity in worship—simplicity with sincerity. Sanctimonious show and hypocrisy repelled him, and against these he used stern language. Of vital importance was not the vesture, the offerings, the prestige and the ritual in the temple, but the sincerity with which man worshipped. Christ prayed for all. He prayed for those who persecuted him: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' What can one say of the efficacy of such a prayer? When prayer is the breathing forth of the soul's secret desire to see the salvation of the persecutor, that is truly establishing righteousness on earth (*dharmasaṁsthāpana*).

Nothing moved men's hearts so deeply as this prayer of Christ from the Cross. The spontaneous loyalty he has claimed down the ages is largely the work of this prayer. How can you, O man, withhold your deepest love from him who prayed in that manner while bleeding from wounds inflicted by your hands?

All the sages who had direct knowledge of God, have laid greatest stress upon prayer. For prayer is the simplest and most direct form of worship, which easily unlocks the divine gates of compassion.

One can never repeat too many times this teaching of Christ: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' You do not need a priest's permission to see God. God is your very own. And you are God's very own, however defiled you may be: for one lost sheep, when it returns home, there is rejoicing in heaven. The gate of the Father's mansion is always open for the return of the prodigal son. Christ felt so strongly about the fact of God and man's need of Him, that he became the most explosive preacher against all kinds of religious fraud and commercialism. So, those who traded in religion, conspired and got him killed—crucified. And the result was devastating. Christ spread all over, with such power and promise, that no military force or priestly craft could stay him any longer.

While Christ was still nailed on the cross, blood dripping on the ground, 'the chief priests mockingly said among themselves with the scribes, "He saved others; himself he cannot save."'[41] What tremendous irony: this divine incapacity of the all-powerful! Would to God the priests knew how true were their words! The saviour cannot save himself: the highest law in the universe, the law of sacrifice, forbids it. He must 'die' so that others can live. He must give life so that others may have life.

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[40] ibid., 6.5, 7.

[41] Mark, 15.31.

Crucifixion was the acme of self-giving. He who could still the waves with a rebuke, could walk on the water, call forth the dead to life, could give eye-sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, he who could perform at a mere wish all kinds of miracles, he who knew who would betray him—could have easily escaped crucifixion. But he *would* not!

Christ's teaching would have lost most of its impact if he had tried to save his skin. 'He saved others; himself he cannot save.' That is Christ. He *would* not save himself; he had come to completely give himself for the redemption of man. Because he gave himself so completely, we have him today so splendidly. If he had saved himself, he could not have become our saviour.

When one realizes the fact of God, he goes beyond all dualities of pain and pleasure, honour and dishonour, victory and defeat. These may come, but they no longer disturb him. When God is with you, what is there to fear? God was with Jesus in his agony on the Cross. When God is with everyone, who is far and who is near, who is your enemy and whom can you fear? That is the teaching of Vedānta.

Like all great religious teachers, Christ was a great revolutionary, and he got what those who bring revolutions against a moribund established order get—crucifixion.

From that wondrous Cross, Christ lives for ever and ever. From that Cross flowed a tremendous faith in God, and uncontainable power of God. His 'death' was a Christ-explosion greater than any atomic or nuclear explosion that man could ever devise, for its divine 'dust' fell over all mankind and for centuries to come it will continue to fall. Christianity with his flaming message spread over the continents. Whatever has been worthwhile in western civilization is through this explosion from the Cross. After the Industrial Revolution, many forms of substitute religions have come into existence: political, psychological, scientific. But behind all these is lacking something vital—something which man needs above everything else—the facts of God and love as taught by Christ.

Christ's life and teachings have transformed human civilization vitally. His life brought into this world powerful streams of spirituality and has produced many authentic saints. Most of the commendable aspects of western civilization can be traced to his life and teachings. Western civilization started declining from the time when his followers began to disregard his teaching and tried to worship both 'God and mammon' together.

Notwithstanding all failures of men, all disregard shown to him and his teachings, Christ is very much here and now. It is beyong erring humanity to deny him his place as a Saviour of mankind. His words are literally true: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.'[42]

None can separate Christ from the message of the Cross as a symbol of supreme sacrifice, or from his words as the breathing forth of the divine Message. Because this is beyond man, man's future is not without hope. But if we are to have survival and a meaningful future, this can be achieved not by technological advance but by qualitative transformation of man. In the future it will not be any more asked to which religion we belong—but, whether we are pure in heart, whether we love God and man.

In this sense, the message of Christ's life, as one of the most powerful exemplifications of applied Vedānta, is yet a great wave of the future.

42 Mark, 13.31.

HOLY MOTHER, THE COMPLETE WOMAN

SRIMATI INDIRA CHAKRAVARTY

To me the Holy Mother Sarada Devi represents the 'complete woman'.

My feeling and thoughts are given full expression by the inimitable words of the great Swami Vivekananda when he wrote his poem of blessings to Miss Alberta Sturgis:

'The mother's heart, the hero's will,
The softest flower's sweetest feel;
The charm and force that ever sway
The altar fire's flaming play;
The strength that leads, in love obeys;
Far-reaching dreams and patient ways,
Eternal faith in Self, in all
The sight Divine in great in small;
All these, and more than I could see
Today may "Mother" grant to thee.'[1]

These qualities which Swamiji wishes for Miss Sturgis were actually realized in the person of the Holy Mother Sarada Devi. One could speculate it was the idea and the figure of the Holy Mother that came to Swami Vivekananda when he penned these blessings. I would now touch on them very briefly.

Evolution is the great fact and drama of life at its various levels, from the tiniest organism to the highest divine person. While in the lowest stages, evolution is more physical and biological—stressing more of quantity and competition, resulting in the elimination of the weaker and survival of the fittest—, in the higher stages, especially from man onwards, it is mental and spiritual, with stress on quality and characterized by co-operation, compassion, and fulfilment.

In the higher man it is expressed as love and service, culminating in an all-embracing mind and heart. Patience, self-sacrifice, and tireless service are the consequential qualities, and we see all these embodied in the true mother—the mother whom we hold in highest reverence in India.

However, the ordinary earthly mother can have this feeling only for the children of her womb or for a very few who are close to her. But the actual consummation of this ideal becomes possible in the spiritual mother, who can without stint extend infinite love, understanding, and protection to an unlimited number of her spiritual children, old or young, rich or poor, bright or dull, good or bad—to all those who come in contact with her.

When along with such a mother's heart we also find the deep wisdom and illumined vision of a sage, and a quiet courage and heroic will power, then we have truly 'the complete woman'. Such also is the ideal person as envisaged in the Vedāntic tradition. As we study the life of the Holy Mother we are surprised to discover how deeply she manifests the true spirit of Vedānta.

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, her divine husband, the Mother was about to withdraw herself from earthly life and get absorbed in the thought of the Lord; but Sri Ramakrishna came to her in a vision and insisted that she should live on in the world and reveal the motherhood of God to humanity at large.

A biological mother is not able to bestow the same love, the same sort of concern and feeling on every child. But the Holy Mother in her life was singularly successful in doing so. To her the Muslim vagrant Amjad, distrusted and despised by society as a common thief, became the object of her love even as the holy Swami Saradananda, the great and illustrious disciple of Sri Rama-

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[1] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. VII (1958), p. 513.

krishna.[2]

She had no caste-consciousness. She fed Amjad, at that time a social outcaste, with as much care and love as if he were one of her own family, and then cleaned the place with her own hands.[3] With western visitors and devotees also she behaved with an astonishing graciousness and natural freedom from social prejudice, in spite of her being an orthodox *brāhmaṇa* widow. She lived with Miss Margaret Noble, later known as the Sister Nivedita, and even took food in her company. This shows not only her great catholicity but also her active love. In her mother's heart she could not do anything that would pain these foreigners ; she felt they also were her children.

Another instance in her daily life shows how, though divine, she wanted to give her earthly family what they wanted, like any other human mother. As is the custom in Bengal during the Durgā-pūjā (worship of the Divine Mother) when everyone gets new clothes, the Holy Mother asked a disciple to buy a particular kind of foreign-made cloth to be given as a present. In those days, there was virulent anti-British nationalist feeling in the country. The disciple strongly shared these feelings and so did not want to buy this special cloth. The Holy Mother impressed on him the fact that even the Britishers were her children and could not be excluded.[4] All people the world over had claim to her love. These acts were not done for show or publicity. They were an unconscious and spontaneous expression of her innate divine motherhood.

Mother's love does not consider whether one deserves to be loved or not. It rather flows more toward the undeserving, the weak, the prodigal child. Ācārya Śaṅkara has said in a hymn to the Divine Mother that he craves Her grace though he has shortcomings, because 'there may be perverse children but never a bad mother'. This is repeatedly demonstrated in the life of the Holy Mother. She would not see any fault or evil in others. Anyone who called her 'Mother' and came to her for help, whether worldly or spiritual, was accepted and taken to her bosom. Devotees coming to her for initiation were blessed, irrespective of their fitness.

Some of her close companions, like Golap-Ma, questioned the propriety of such a course.[5] But the Mother felt that she was not there to judge those devotees, but to give them love and understanding. This was the divinity in her. Further, she would take upon herself the spiritual responsibility of disciples whom she initiated and even in her last days, when she was quite ill, she would do *japa* (repetition of the holy Name) and pray for them till quite late in the night. Sometimes her sensitive person would experience great pain when sinful people touched her feet. But even so, she did not forbid them, since she was conscious of the fact that Sri Ramakrishna and she were part and parcel of the Divine Godhead and had come to earth to suffer vicariously for the sins of those who took refuge in them. She knew they had nothing to attain for themselves, but that their life was only a sacrificial offering for the enlightenment and salvation of others. The Holy Mother's thoughts and actions have entered into the minds and hearts of many devotees just because of this redeeming love of her divine motherhood. Her spiritual consciousness was not affected even while living in the midst of her family members, who were worldly to a great degree.

The saint and the sinner were both in her eyes precious because of their com-

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[2] Swami Gambhirananda : *Holy Mother—Sri Sarada Devi* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1955) , p. 372.

[3] loc. cit.

[4] ibid., p. 258.

[5] ibid., p. 366.

mon inner humanity, nay common divinity. Her wide heart embraced all humanity as children for whom she would suffer and pray. Seeing this in the Holy Mother, a disciple (Kedar) remarked: 'Mother, nobody will care for the goddesses Shashthi, Shitala, etc., after (seeing) you.' It is in her artless comment on this remark that the Holy Mother reveals her innate transcendental divinity: 'Why should they not? They are only my own parts.'[6] In her life we find the unique example of one who in spite of living within the family circle, shouldering the daily chores, responsibilities, frictions and worries of such a life, yet kept aloft a glorious spirit of renunciation, discrimination and devotion. She was a dutiful daughter, a dedicated wife, a magnificent mother, and an immaculate nun at the same time. Even after the death of Sri Ramakrishna, she came back to her native place Jayrambati, where she looked after her own old mother till her death and also took up the whole burden of her brothers till the end.

But all this responsibility that she bore, especially the intense love she showed for her demented niece, Radhu, was but a bondage voluntarily accepted as it were, in order to keep her body and mind down on the mundane plane, so that she could continue in her physical body and render spiritual help. She put up with all the endless demands and various ill-treatments of her family members: her life was one of supreme renunciation and forgiveness. When asked by devotees about this aspect of her life, she explained that it is rather easy for a spiritual being to withdraw from the world and become absorbed in the loneliness of nature and thought of God inwardly; but she wanted to show the householder, the *gṛhī*, that even one living in this world of māyā can still attain to great spiritual heights and become one with God. She showed by her own example that it is universal love, purity of mind and body, and real devotion that bring one to God. Her powerful purity uplifted and transformed even obviously wicked persons. When once she was going to Dakshineswar from Jayrambati and her way lay through a vast robber-infested meadow, she was confronted in the late evening by a brigand couple. But in her own unique guileless way, she appealed to their higher instincts and addressed them as father and mother; and more, she requested them to take her to Dakshineswar! The influence of her purity was such that not only did she escape any molestation, but this very pair of dangerous brigands took on the role of her protecting parents, and escorted her through the darkness to safety.

It is commonplace to say that she was the closest and foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, in that her soul and spirit were in perfect tune with his own thoughts, ideals, and mission in life. In turn, she was to Ramakrishna the ideal woman personified, a veritable Devī. To us, the women of today, who are confused by so much of social change and turmoil, and the rush to measure up to masculine standards, the Holy Mother's life is a quiet but powerful and convincing proof that women need not lose their own individuality—that they can be true to their own glorious heritage and express their superior possibilities in a wider context and relationship. Her conversations and teachings give us invaluable instructions, containing as their essence the lofty principles of Vedānta expressed in a charmingly simple and lucid way.

The Mother, however, preferred to stress the path of devotion. As she often said, 'Bhakti or devotion alone accomplishes everything.'[7] Her short, profound message

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6 ibid., p. 441.

7 *Sri Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1940), p. 299.

to a disciple just a few days before she left this world—a message most relevant to the solution of our present-day problems, individual and social—was: 'If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; this whole world is your own!'[8]

The essence of her entire life was thus purity and courage, patience and love, prayer and peace.

Swami Vivekananda had inspired Sister Nivedita to come to India and dedicate herself to the service of the women of India. Nivedita was a fiery spirit, very intelligent and dynamic; yet even she considered the gentle and shy Holy Mother as the 'ideal woman'. 'To me it has always appeared that she [Sarada Devi] is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood. But is she the last of an old order, of the beginning of a new?'[9]—was her exclamation of wonder. To us, however, the Holy Mother stands right now as the eternal exemplar and inspirer of the qualities that constitute a complete woman, a true *pūrṇā-nārī*. We have only to follow in her footsteps in our own humble way.

[8] ibid., p. 256.

[9] Sister Nivedita: *The Master As I Saw Him* (Udbodhan Office, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta-3, 1930), p. 175.

THE MESSAGE AND INFLUENCE OF VIVEKANANDA

J. V. Nash

(Continued from the October issue)

[The first part of this article, dealing mainly with Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, was published in our October issue. The second and final part, which is being offered to our readers now, sketches Swamiji's whole life in a brief compass, making liberal use of reminescences and first-hand reports. A small inaccuracy, however, seems to have crept in early in this instalment, in referring to 'many distinguished European scholars' visiting Sri Ramakrishna. To the best of our knowledge, this did not occur. Again, a point of clarification: at the end of the article the author says Sister Nivedita established her School 'a few years later', apparently meaning after Swamiji's demise. As is well known however, her first School was founded in November 1898, more than three and a half years before Swamiji's *mahāsamādhi*. For other particulars about this article, originally from *The Open Court* magazine, we refer the readers to our prefatory note with the previous instalment.—*Ed.*]

How had Vivekananda happened to appear in America as a visitor to the Parliament of Religions? To answer this question, it will be necessary to acquaint ourselves with the circumstances of his early life.

Narendra Nath Dutt was born at Calcutta in 1863, was educated at the local university, and in 1884 received the degree of B.A. At this time there was living in the famous temple garden at Dakshineswara, on the eastern bank of the Ganges

about four miles north of Calcutta, the great religious mystic known as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The young student joined the group of disciples which gathered about Ramakrishna in the temple garden. He became a special favourite of Ramakrishna. In India a student of philosophy and religion regularly attaches himself to some great teacher as his *Guru* or master. It is thus that spiritual knowledge is handed on from generation to generation, rather than by the study of books.

A peculiarly intimate relationship developed between the eager young disciple and the venerable seer. In the record of the discourses of Paramahamsa, compiled by another disciple under the title *The Gospel of Ramakrishna,* we have many delightful glimpses of the disciple Narendra at the feet of his guide.

The name *Vivekananda,* which Narendra on becoming a *sannyasin* adopted as that by which he wished to be known in religion, is composed of two Sanskrit words meaning 'bliss in discrimination', words rather meaningless to the western ear, but the technical significance of which will be readily understood by anyone who has made a study of Hindu philosophy. To the end of life, Vivekananda lovingly referred to Ramakrishna as 'My Master'. Many distinguished European scholors visited the seer to discuss with him the problems of philosophy and religion. Professor Max Müller was so impressed by Ramakrishna that he published an appreciative study of the Hindu saint in *The Nineteenth Century.* To this day he is widely revered in India as a true Avatar or Divine Incarnation. He taught the oneness of God. 'God is One', he said, in a discourse with his disciples, 'only His names are different. Some call Him by the name of Allah, some God, some Brahman, others Kali, others again Rama, Hari, Jesus, Buddha.' All religions he would gladly accept as paths leading to the same goal, and he looked upon Realization as the great goal of the religious life.

When Ramakrishna passed from earth in 1886, his devoted disciples, including Narendra, longed to take up the Master's work and to carry his message not only to all India but to the outside world as well.

Such was the background of the young Hindu when, in *the spring of 1893, clad* only in the orange robe of a *sannyasin,* and bearing a pilgrim's staff, he set out alone for America by way of China and Japan. In a sketch published after his death, one of Vivekananda's disciples wrote: 'He had been chosen for this mission by a few earnest young men of Madras who, firm in their belief that he, better than anyone, could worthily represent the ancient religion of India, had gone from door to door soliciting money for his journey. The amount thus collected, together with contributions from one or two princes, enabled the youthful monk, the then obscure Swami Vivekananda, to set out on his long journey.'

The disciple goes on to say:

'It required tremendous courage to venture forth on such a mission. To leave the sacred soil of India for a foreign country means far more to a Hindu than we of the West can realize. Especially is this the case with a *sannyasin,* whose whole training is away from the practical, material side of life. Unused to handling money, or to any mode of travel save on his own feet, the Swami was robbed and imposed upon at every stage of his journey until, when he finally reached Chicago, he was nearly penniless. He had brought with him no letters of introduction and knew no one in the great city. Thus alone among strangers, thousands of miles from his own country, it was a situation to daunt

even a strong man; but the Swami left the matter in the hands of the Lord, firm in his faith that divine protection would never fail him.'

In less than two weeks, exorbitant hotel keepers and others had reduced his funds almost to the vanishing point. In a letter some time latter he tells how crowds, attracted by his quaint dress, followed him on the streets, hooting at him. His situation was desperate. 'For a *moment* a wave of discouragement and doubt swept over him and he began to wonder why he had been so foolish as to listen to those few hot-headed schoolboys of Madras.'

In his extremity, with no prospect but that of 'starvation in the street', if he remained in Chicago, he left the city. He resolved to go to Boston, and, if he met with no change of fortune, abandon his mission and return to India.

On the train en route East he chanced to meet an elderly lady, a resident of Boston, who, learning of the predicament in which this strange young Oriental found himself, gave him the shelter of her home. There he met a Harvard Professor. Vivekananda's later correspondence identifies him as J. H. Wright. After a four-hour discussion with Vivekananda, the Harvard savant earnestly urged upon him the importance of his returning to Chicago and participating in the approaching Parliament of Religions. When Vivekananda explained his difficulties, the professor pointed out that the president of the Parliament was his personal friend, and he lost no time in giving Vivekananda a letter of introduction in which he declared that he had found this young Hindu 'more learned than all our learned men put together'.

Presented with the letter and with a ticket to Chicago, Vivekananda returned thither and was at once accepted as a delegate to the Parliament. In a letter dated July 11, 1894, he pays tribute to Professor Wright 'as having been the first man who stood as my friend'.

Then came the opening of the Parliament and Vivekananda's extraordinary transition overnight into a personage of international interest.

After the close of the Parliament, as we have already indicated, Vivekananda was persuaded to go on a lecture tour of the country. While his audiences were everywhere most enthusiastic, the work proved distasteful and he soon gave it up, although by its continuance he could, had he chosen, have accumulated a financial fortune. He then began speaking informally to small parlour audiences. But this form of instruction seemed to him superficial and was in turn abandoned.

Lionized as he was, Vivekananda never allowed his head to be turned. On all hands we have testimony of his modesty, his courtesy, his gentleness, and his innate tactfulness in dealing with all sorts of individuals.

One who was closely associated with him has written:

'It was given to me to know him in an intimate way for a period of several years, and never once did I find a flaw in his character. He was incapable of petty weakness, and had Vivekananda possessed faults they would have been generous ones. With all his greatness he was as simple as a child, equally at home among the rich and the great, or among the poor and the lowly.

'While in Detroit he was the guest of Mrs. John J. Bigelow [Bagley], the widow of the ex-Governor of Michigan and a lady of rare culture and unusual spirituality. She told me that never once during the time he was a guest in her house (about four weeks) did he fail to express the highest in word and action, that his presence was a "continual benediction."

'His manner was that of boyish frankness and naivete, and very winsome. . . . He was

the "man of the hour" in Detroit that winter. Society smiled upon him and he was much sought after. The daily papers recorded his comings and goings; even his food was discussed. . . . Letters and invitations came pouring in and Detroit was at the feet of Vivekananda.'

His first lecture in Detroit was delivered in the Unitarian Church. The scene, doubtless typical of countless others, is described by an eye-witness as follows:

'The large edifice was literally packed and the Swami received an ovation. I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an aeolian harp; again, deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a silence that could almost be felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man. . . . His was the grasp of the "master mind" and he spoke as one with authority. His arguments were logical, convincing, and in his most brilliant oratorical flights never once did he lose sight of the main issue—the truth he wished to drive home.

'He fearlessly attacked principles, but not personal matters. One felt that here was a man whose great heart could take in all of humanity, seeing beyond their faults and foibles; one who would suffer and forgive to the uttermost. In fact, when it was given to me to know him more intimately, I found that he did forgive to the uttermost. With what infinite love and patience would he lead those who came to him, out of the labyrinth of their own frailties and point out to them the way out of self to God. He knew no malice.'

In Jewish synagogues, too, did Vivekananda deliver his message and received a no less cordial welcome. Two years later, after a brief visit to England, he was in Detroit again, speaking in a leading synagogue. The occasion is thus described:

'His last public appearance in Detroit was at the Temple Beth-El of which the Rabbi Louis Grossman, an ardent admirer of the Swami, was the pastor. It was Sunday evening and so great was the crowd that we almost feared a panic. There was a solid line reaching far out into the street and hundreds were turned away. Vivekananda held the large audience spellbound, his subject being: "India's Message to the West", and "The Ideal of a Universal Religion". He gave us a most brilliant and masterly discourse. Never had I seen the Master look as he looked that night. There was something in his beauty not of earth. It was as if the spirit had almost burst the bonds of flesh, and it was then that I first saw a foreshadowing of the end. He was much exhausted from years of overwork, and it was even then to be seen that he was not long for this world.'

Some time before this period, following a lecture arranged by the Brooklyn Ethical Association, Vivekananda had established himself in a humble lodging-house in New York City, where disciples gathered to hear and question him. His classes became so large that they quickly overflowed the limited accommodations. 'Students', we are told, 'sat on the dresser and on the corner marble wash-basin, and still others on the floor, like the Swami himself, who, thus seated cross-legged after the manner of his own country, taught his eager students the great truths of Vedanta.'

This was the work which he found most congenial, this the environment in which he felt most at ease. 'At last he felt that he was fairly started on his mission, which was to deliver to the western world the message of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, which proclaimed the truth and fundamental unity of all religions.'

The throngs of students who came to him made necessary the securing of larger quarters, and throughout a season the

Swami taught without charge all who came. To help meet the financial expenses of these free classes, he accepted engagements for lectures on secular subjects.

During the summer of 1895, the Swami spent several weeks at Thousand Island Park, where one of his disciples maintained a summer home amid scenes of great natural beauty. Here Vivekananda found rest and refreshment, and here he gave intimate talks to a select circle of friends and students. Through long summer evenings the little group sat on the cottage veranda looking out over the moonlit islands to the far Canadian shore, while Vivekananda discoursed on God and the soul, on realization and immortality, on the Vedas, and on universal religion.

One of this group later wrote:

'None of us can ever forget the uplift, the intense spiritual life, of those hallowed hours. The Swami poured out all his heart at those times; his own struggles were enacted again before us; the very spirit of his Master seemed to speak through his lips, to satisfy all doubts, to answer all questioning, to soothe every fear. Many times the Swami seemed hardly conscious of our presence, and then we almost held our breath for fear of disturbing him and checking the flow of his thoughts. He would rise from his seat and pace up and down the narrow limits of the piazza, pouring forth a perfect torrent of eloquence. Never was he more gentle, more lovable, than during these hours. It may have been much like the way his own great Master taught his disciples, just allowing them to listen to the outpourings of his own spirit in communion with himself.'

And again:

'Often playful and fun loving, full of merry jest and quick repartee, he was never for a moment far from the dominating note of his life. Everything could furnish a text or an illustration, and in a moment we would find ourselves swept from amusing tales of Hindu mythology to the deepest philosophy. The Swami had an inexhaustible fund of mythological lore, and surely no race is more abundantly supplied with myths than those ancient Aryans. He loved to tell them to us and we delighted to listen, for he never failed to point out the reality hidden under the myth and story, and to draw from it valuable spiritual lessons.'

On April 15, 1896, Vivekananda sailed again for England; establishing himself in London he was soon busily at work. Late in the summer of that year he travelled extensively on the Continent. A letter speaks of 'a beautiful time with Professor Deussen in Germany', who, it appears, accompanied him back to England. In a letter written from his London lodgings he writes: 'Max Müller is getting very friendly. I am soon going to deliver two lectures at Oxford.'

At last, Vivekananda was ready to turn his steps homeward. On his arrival at Colombo, Ceylon, on January 15, 1897, he was given an ovation by the Hindu community.

In that once popular Christian revival hymn, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains to India's Coral Strand,' Ceylon odiously described as an island 'where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.'

It may be somewhat enlightening, therefore, to note the address of welcome which was presented to Vivekananda by the Hindus of Ceylon:

'Revered Sir: In pursuance of a resolution passed at a public meeting of the Hindus of the city of Colombo we beg to offer you a hearty welcome to this Island. We deem it a privilege to be the first to welcome you on your return from your grand mission in the West.

'We have watched with joy and thankfulness the success with which the mission has, under God's blessing, been crowned. You have proclaimed to the nations of Europe and America, the Hindu ideal of a universal

religion, harmonizing all creeds, providing spiritual food for each soul according to its needs, and lovingly drawing it unto God. You have preached the Truth and the Way, taught from remote ages by a succession of Masters whose blessed feet have walked and sanctified the soil of India, and whose gracious presence and inspiration have made her through all her vicissitudes, the Light of the World.

'To the inspiration of such a Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva, and to your self-sacrificing zeal, western nations owe the priceless boon of being placed in living contact with the spiritual genius of India, while to many of our own countrymen, delivered from the glamour of western civilization, the value of our glorious heritage has been brought home.

'By your noble work and example you have laid humanity under an obligation difficult to repay, and you have shed fresh lustre upon our Motherland. We pray that the grace of God may continue to prosper you and your work, and we remain, Revered Sir,' etc.

Vivekananda's progress through India was marked by a whole series of similar ovations.

But his years of exhausting labour in strange lands had told heavily on Vivekananda. He seemed to realize that his days were practically numbered. In a letter dated from Almora, in the Himalayan region, July 9, 1898, he said:

'The way is long, the time is short, evening is approaching. I have to go home soon. I have no time to give my manners a finish. I cannot find time enough to deliver my message . . . I feel my task is done,—at best, only three or four years more of life is left. . . .'

The year 1899 found him extremely ill. It was hoped by his friends that a sea voyage might do him good. In July he sailed from Calcutta for London, where a number of his disciples, both English and American, were on hand to welcome him at the dock. After a month of rest in the English capital, Vivekananda sailed again for America, accompanied by a Hindu companion and some American friends. One of the latter tells of the voyage across the Atlantic:

'There were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean. Reading and exposition of the *Gita* occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight, stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. "And if all this *Maya* (illusion) is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the reality behind it!" he would exclaim.'

For several months he lectured and taught once more in America, revisiting many cities and renewing countless friendships. One who saw him at Detroit on July 4, 1900, writes: 'He had grown so thin, almost ethereal,—not long would that great spirit be imprisoned in clay. . . . I never saw him again. . . . Of that time I cannot bear to think. The sorrow and the heartbreak of it all still abides with me; but deep down underneath all the pain and grief is a great calm, a sweet and blessed consciousness that Great Souls do come to earth to point out to men "the way, the truth, and the life".'

Vivekananda returned to India only to die. Devoted disciples, English and American, as well as Hindu, were with him to the end. His love for America was abiding and found continual expression. Indeed to many it seemed significant that the close of Vivekananda's life, in the summer of 1902, at Belur, fell on the anni-

versary of American independence, July Fourth. He was not yet forty years of age when his voice was stilled and his pen laid away forever.

The influence of Vivekananda, however, lived on.

Vedanta Societies which sprang up as a result of his American mission, notably in New York and San Francisco, have perpetuated Vivekananda's teachings in this country.

Vivekananda, though he sometimes prepared manuscripts, was always most at home in extemporaneous address and informal conversation. He did not care to look at reports of his talks, handed to him for approval. The only book which seems to have been published with his personal co-operation is the well-known volume entitled 'Raja Yoga' (The Royal Way of Attainment) which is still in print in America. Since his death, however, a Mayavati Memorial Edition of the Works of Vivekananda has been published by his disciples in India, filling seven large volumes. The amount of material thus gathered together and its range are alike astonishing. It consists of essays, lectures, sermons, narratives, letters, interviews, informal conversations, translations from the Sanskrit and Bengali, and poetry.

The education of the youth of India particularly of the girls, was especially close to the heart of Vivekananda. 'Education is what they need,' he said, 'we must have a school in Calcutta.'

This dream was realized a few years later by Miss Margaret E. Noble, a lady of Irish Protestant extraction and the strong force of character which usually goes with it, who had met Vivekananda in London. At first strongly antagonistic to his teachings, she ultimately became an earnest disciple. As the Sister Nivedita (The Dedicated One) she established a school in the heart of Calcutta's Hindu quarter.

Through these and other agencies the work of Vivekananda has been carried on, and the seed sown at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 has continued to bring forth fruit.

(*Concluded*)

RAMMOHUN AND THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE

DR. KALYAN K. CHATTERJEE

At this time when India has just celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of Rammohun's birth, it is appropriate to attempt a re-assessment of the title by which biographical notes on him are usually introduced: 'the father of the Indian Renaissance', a title he eminently deserves, but one that is often vaguely understood. The term Renaissance is used literally in Indian historiography without the specific connotation of a distinct era and culture that it conveys to the European historians. However, taken even in its European sense, the term becomes strikingly appropriate in describing the role of Rammohun in the intellectual history of the nineteenth century India. It is this aspect of Rammohun's role that occupies me in the following essay.

Rammohun's pioneering role in the Indian Renaissance is largely conceived in terms of his enthusiasm for western education and civilization and of his active support to the 'Anglicists'. At a crucial time, when the British wanted native support for the introduction of English, Rammohun wrote his

famous letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 urging the Government to desist from the futility of establishing a Sanskrit college in Calcutta, and instead, direct its efforts towards imparting modern western education in English. At this stage, I would like to make two points clear: first, nowhere in this letter is there any repudiation of the inherent greatness of Sanskrit, in which Rammohun was a pre-eminent scholar of his day ; second, the letter is not to be taken as a policy-making document. The British Government would have switched its support from Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian anyway, as annexation of India to the British Empire became a *faith accompli*. The British needed a class of 'English-knowing' natives to act as intermediate functionaries between the Government and the people. And if a sufficient number of natives *knowing* English were not forthcoming, then the British would have to learn the languages of India. But the British were not going to do that. The *Friend of India,* an organ of the Scottish missionaries, which was opposed to the imposition of English on India, pointedly asked in its issue of March 8, 1838: 'Are the thirty millions of people in Bengal to be forever deprived of the use of their own language in the management of their public business, beause thirty European gentlemen may not have the leisure to acquire it ? ' The question went abegging.

But the fact was also that the natives themselves were keen to learn English. There were jobs to be had, and a Company job was the best. There was business to be done, and knowledge of English would be an asset. After all, Renaissance Europe had established numerous schools to learn Latin not purely from cultural and ideological motives. Latin was the international language of the then Church of Rome. In addition, Latin and Greek classics became an indispensable part of an educated man imparting to him the badge of refinement and culture. English came to India with a prestige and a utility similar to Latin in Europe in the sixteenth century. In 1789 the private efforts of Calcutta citizens led to the foundation of the Calcutta Book Society. And in 1816 it was private efforts again that led to the foundation of the Hindu College, in which Rammohun was one of the chief promoters, albeit in the background. He had by this time aroused suspicion about his loyalty to the Hindu religion, and, therefore, chose to remain in the background.

But to return to the letter Rammohun wrote to Amherst, the most important thing to observe in it is the note of social idealism, the ideology of social change that, he thought, called for a forthright switch to English education, and in invoking his arguments, he harked back to the European Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the same way as Macaulay and Trevelyan did ten years later in their successful efforts to make English the medium of instruction. Rammohun analogized the traditional Hindu education with the barren formalities of medieval education in Europe, to which the Renaissance put an end. As Rammohun spoke of the traditional Sanskrit education, he sounded like a Renaissance Humanist opposed to scholastic philosophy and education. Referring to the Sanskrit college proposed by the Government, Rammohun wrote in that letter: 'This Seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society.'[1]

Rammohun's claim to be regarded as the father of the Indian Renaissance is therefore doubly significant—he welcomed the English education in the same way as the Renais-

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[1] *Selections from Educational Records,* ed. Henry Sharp, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 99-100.

sance educators welcomed the classical, that is, as a liberation from the orthodoxy and obscurantism of the scholastics. The fact that he was also a religious reformer, looking upon European knowledge as an aid to the fight against the orthodoxy and evil customs of the contemporary Indian society, and its ignorance of the scriptures strengthens the analogy between him and the European champions of the Revival of Learning, who too found in classical education in Greek and Latin an intellectual and moral liberation from the orthodoxy and emptiness of medieval Christian theology. Rammohun's position was thus quintessentially that of the Renaissance Humanist. But the analogy with the Renaissance in Europe that Rammohun drew upon, and which the Duffs, Macaulays, and Trevelyans later used to support their argument to scrap indigenous education in favour of English, was a partial one, and concealed two important facts of the European Renaissance as it matured through the early enthusiasms of the Latin and Greek scholars. First, Latin and Greek, especially Latin, were not completely alien to the Europeans; they were in fact part of their tradition, religious and intellectual. Their scriptures and theology were in Latin, and Latin was the medium of education in the medieval era. The contribution of the Renaissance was that it took the advantage of the revival of important literary texts in these two languages and based the teaching of Latin and Greek on an intensive study of the literatures in these two languages, influenced as they were by the classical pedagogy of literary imitation. Second, and this is the most crucial point to remember, the medium through which the Renaissance spread in Europe was not Latin or Greek, but the vernacular. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, Rabelais, Montaigne, and Ronsard, all wrote in the vernaculars. So did the Tudor educators, Eliot, Ascham, and Puttenham. So did the Reformers, Tyndale, Martin Luther, and in fact all the other Protestant Reformers. Tyndale and Luther were profound Latin and Greek scholars, but they understood that their movement would not spread to the masses without the scriptures being translated into the vernacular, thus breaking the monopoly of the Church elite in scriptural and theological matters. Renaissance Latinism fostered an evanescent elitism which the democratic impulses of an emergent Europe justly confined to the precincts of the universities.

What really could have brought an inspiring national Renaissance in India much more stirring, original, and widespread than the phenomenon described as the 'nineteenth century Renaissance' was a process of vernacularizing English literature, science, and philosophy. If western knowledge was what India needed so badly, the incorporation of which in the education of the Indians the despatches of the Directors of the East India Company went on urging (for example the educational Despatch of 1814), then what contradiction was there in the argument of the Orientalists to vernacularize the medium of instruction? To be sure, Rammohun was not anti-vernacular; he himself translated from Sanskrit into Bengali as well as English. He wrote extensively in Bengali, and is one of the pioneers of the Bengali prose. But Rammohun may have attached an exaggerated importance to the power of native obscurantism on the one hand, and on the other, to the dedication of the British to India's progress. Furthermore, in not emphasizing the vernacular medium, Rammohun may have been motivated by the idea of a western educated elite transmitting their knowledge to the people, a sort of a trickling-down concept that Macaulay[2] and Trevelyan[3]

2 'Minutes of the Indian Education', in various collections of Macaulay's works.

3 *On the Education of the People of India* (London, 1838).

actually offered in the guise of the analogy with the European Renaissance.

The Orientalists were not all obscurantists, nor the type of convenient Indianizers like Warren Hastings, who wanted to keep India away from the progressive ideas of Europe. Among these people must be included Brian Hodgson, a contemporary of Rammohun, a linguist and an ethnologist, who spent a long time in India, studying its culture and languages and was not a Macaulay who gloried in his aloofness from things Indian. Hodgson argued from a democratic view of education, that is, in his opinion, the whole society, rather than an elite, should have been the beneficiary of education. If knowledge was to be generally diffused to the society (as the Despatch of 1814 had advised), English was certainly a circumscribing medium. Hodgson argued that the adoption of an 'anti-vernacular organ' would lead only to the 'natural proneness of knowledge to contraction and perversion',[4] a statement that I cannot but regard as prophetic in view of the course English education actually took in India. Hodgson was for the widest diffusion of European knowledge among the people of India, he was for the 'house-hold identification' of the new knowledge.[5] This forgotten Indologist of the early nineteenth century offered a view that did not find any representation in Macaulay's arrogant document of elitist education, the 'Minutes of Indian Education'. 'The moral and intellectual regeneration of India', Hodgson declared, 'had to be carried in the *living languages of India*', (italics mine) and 'the communication of general truths' must be accompanied with all 'the recommendations of acknowledged precepts and examples that can be safely borrowed from the vast and various literature of the country'.[6] Hodgson tried to make people understand that in the scheme of the renewal of Indian education the emphasis should be, not on the propagation of English, but on subjecting it to 'the creation of a national literature and of a national system of education'.[7] In other words, running counter to the Anglicists, Hodgson offered the most forthright view of the Indianization of western knowledge. Rammohun, who could have known actual cases of widow burning in and around where he lived (his biographers are not sure that he really had), and who had only a few years of British rule to separate his generation from the depredations of the Marathas and the thugs, had looked upon the British as an agency for the liberation of India from her own spasms of decay. Above all, he hoped that the British would transmit to India European democracy and constitutionalism.

With that hope in mind, Rammohun wanted to have a broader and more direct contact between the Indians and Europeans than could be achieved by merely following a western curriculum of studies. So he proposed that India be settled by Europeans, so that the local population may benefit from the enlightened ideas of the Europeans, and derive help and inspiration from them in opposing native and foreign despotisms alike. The presence of 'a body of respectable settlers' (this must be understood rightly; Rammohun wanted the *enlightened* and the *respectable*, not the riff-raff of the European population), speaking 'the English language in common with the bulk of the people' and possessing 'superior knowledge' would bring India 'to a level with other large European countries in Europe'.[8]

We can only shudder at such a proposal today, because we have the example of the apartheid of South Africa and Rhodesia,

4 *Miscellaneous Essays relating to Indian Subjects* (London, 1880), p. 283. The views expressed here were originally contained in Hodgson's letters to the *Friend of India* (Weekly) in the year 1835.

5 ibid., p. 283.

6 ibid., p. 306.

7 ibid., p. 312.

8 *The English Works* Vol. I (Calcutta, 1887), p. 615.

and also of a century of self-righteous and often supercilious behaviour from the very best and ablest of the academic products of Britain coming to this country as administrators. However, in all fairness to Rammohun, we must add that in a supplement to his proposal (London, July 14, 1832), he added a caveat : European settlement in India should be undertaken experimentally. As Rammohun looked to the New World, he saw Canada and U.S.A. achieving phenomenal progress and prosperity as a result of the settlement of these countries by various nationalities from Europe, his faith in humanity not permitting him to see that a non-white element in the melting pot of America would have turned the mixture sour, as it did when the Black demanded freedom and democratic rights.

But the fact that Rammohun had such an unbounded faith in the regenerative role that Europe could play in India also explains why he championed the cause of western education. To be sure, his emphasis was on the diffusion of western ideas of science and progress, not on producing an Anglicized native elite. Nor did he desire to inflict on the nation an oblivion of its own culture and philosophy. Witness his many Bengali translations from and commentaries on the scriptures. Witness his founding of the Vedanta College (1826) in Calcutta. But it was Rammohun's belief that the motor of Indian history would not turn over without the impelling force and heat of western ideas, a belief that is difficult to find fault with. And it is probably demanding too much of history that Rammohun, to whom personally English unlocked the gates of democracy, science, literature and a rational theology, should not have credited to westernization a more disproportionate role in education than the interests of national integrity warranted. But his mission carried him far away from his beloved land and he died in England three years before the Education Act of 1835. Had he been alive and in India at that time, would he not have resented Macaulay's arrogant remarks about the literature and tradition of India? Would he not have tried to temper the 'Minutes' with a plea for the simultaneous study of the Oriental civilisation? We can only guess.

Hodgson had vainly persuaded the powers that were : 'We seek to regenerate India ; and lay the foundations of a social system which time and God's blessing on the labours of the founders shall mature, perhaps long after we are no longer forthcoming on the scene. Let, then, the foundations be broad enough to support the vast superstructure.'[9]

But the foundations were not broad enough as they were laid in 1835, too deep to be changed by successive attempts at realism and balance, for example, those by Lord Auckland, and later those by others following the Despatch of 1854 (the 'Wood Despatch'). The idea of bringing western education to the people through the indigenous languages was never accepted by the Government. No doubt the job was too vast for them to accomplish. But especially after the Mutiny of 1856, the British remained wary of anything that would bring about an undesirable enlightenment and awakening among the teeming masses of India.

But to sum up Rammohun's educational role in the Indian Renaissance : He indeed looked to the West not so much for religion as for intellectual and social ideals, the importation of which he thought would revolutionize the Indian society disfigured by centuries of ignorance, orthodoxy, and political despotism. He looked to England and found in the Renaissance of the six-

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9 Letter to the *Friend of India*, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Essays* Vol. II. p. 275.

teenth century a paradigm of intellectual and social progress. Zealous as he was for the emergence of India from ignorance and retrogression, from which he saw Europe emerging through the rejection of medieval learning, he thought that India could dispense with the grammatical and rhetorical subtleties of the Sanskrit and Arabic schools in the interest of modern education. The fact that he was not against the knowledge of India's heritage is proved by his sponsoring and founding of the Vedanta College of Calcutta and by his many Bengali and English translations from ancient Hindu scriptures. He realized that India must understand her tradition, but in a modern spirit. When we add to all this his pioneering role in the development of the modern Bengali prose and his founding of the *Samācār Darpan,* the first vernacular newspaper in India, we begin to realize that he was the very soul of the 'Indian Renaissance'. It was not for him to sound the intense patriotic harp of a Vivekananda or a Gandhi, because the primary need for India then was to participate in the processes of modern civilization, to develop social awareness, and the intellectual tools to convert that awareness into an enlightened mode of life.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Question and answer are from 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947, pp. 845-6.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works,* Vol. I (1962), pp. 127-8.

The parallelism between the teachings of the *Gītā* and the life of the Holy Mother has been observed and mentioned by many of her biographers and other writers. We are not saying anything new here. Our attempt in this month's Editorial has been to make a somewhat detailed study of this remarkable similarity. Our readers, we hope, will be interested in this study this month when the Holy Mother's birthday will be observed both in India and abroad.

Jesus was certainly more than a mere son of the Jewish race and faith. This 'more' in him caused him crucifixion. Great enormity of man though it was, withal without this the Resurrection would be unthinkable. It was through the Resurrection that Jesus of time emerged as the Christ of eternity, as Christ the Saviour. But Christ was never a 'Christian':—or one may say that he was the first true Christian. He was at the same time a most wondrous exemplification of the abiding principles of the timeless Religion of Man, which is also called Vedānta. This Christ we call 'Our Christ'.

'Our Christ' is an edited and enlarged version of Swami Budhananda's Christmas sermon last year at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh, India. As our readers will note, the Swami views the life and teachings of the Son of Man against the background of the eternal principles of Vedānta and in the light of other divine Incarnations, the latest of whom is Sri Ramakrishna. In this interpretation of Christ's life, and theological concepts like the Kingdom of Heaven, the Cross, and Resurrection, one cannot fail to notice the results of

the Swami's long and deep study of Christ and Christianity

Incidentally we express our grateful thanks to Sri Vishwanath Hoon, a close associate of our Chandigarh Centre, but for whose devoted note-taking this fine article would have slept long among the Swami's files.

Kabīr used to say, 'The Formless Absolute is my Father and God with Form is my Mother.' Sri Ramakrishna quoted Kabīr often in voicing his own exalted experiences. Man or woman, the ideal to be attained is Godhood. 'Liberation' is needed as much for men as for women. Liberation from what?—from the deep-rooted false notion that one is the body with all its various morphological and biological differentiae. Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother stand out as supreme exemplars of the various ways by which this spiritual liberation can be achieved by both men women.

'Holy Mother, The Complete Woman' is a tribute to the Mother paid by an earnest devotee. While delineating some salient aspects of the Holy Mother's life and personality, the article points out how the Mother's example and teachings can serve to inspire and guide present-day humanity. Srimati Indira Chakravarty is a close devotee of the Ramakrishna Mission, Chandigarh, and the text of this article was given as an address on 17 March 1973, during the annual celebrations at the Centre.

Raja Rammohun Roy has been called the 'father of the Indian Renaissance', and legitimately too. But it is not unoften that Rammohun's paternal role in the Indian Renaissance goes ununderstood. While Rammohun remained a dyed-in-the-wool Indian, he had the farsightedness and breadth of heart to invite European influence—educational, cultural, and social—to initiate and leaven the Indian Renaissance. Dr. Kalyan K. Chatterjee, of the Dept. of English, Himachal Pradesh University, Simla, very ably discusses the role played by Rammohun in ushering in the national revival.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SRI AUROBINDO AND BERGSON—A SYNTHETIC STUDY: BY A. C. BHATTACHARYA, Published by Jagabandhu Prakashan, Sri Ramakrishna Bhavan, Gyanpur (Varanasi), pp. xx+282, Price Rs. 30/-.

Besides an introductory chapter and a concluding one, this book comprises sixteen chapters which fall into four tetrads, devoted to the exposition of the views of Bergson and Aurobindo on four important topics: Intuition, Evolution, the Nature of Reality, and the Destiny that awaits man. In each of these tetrads the first chapter gives a general account of the topic, the second sets forth the view of Bergson, the third, Aurobindo's view, and the fourth undertakes a comparison between the views of the two thinkers.

The cultural milieu of Aurobindo having been so different from Bergson's, one is first inclined to wonder what there could be in common between them to warrant a synthetic study. But this is a superficial view. In spite of the difference in training and the mode of approach, thinkers are bound to agree at the deeper levels. The deeper we think the closer is the agreement between us. The laws which govern thought are the same irrespective of time and place.

By a careful study of the published works of these two thinkers, the author has brought out the broad lines of agreement between them in respect of the four topics mentioned above. Besides his careful study, the author had to fill in many gaps and reinterpret the two writers in the light of the general trend implicit in them. In the case of Bergson, the author had to exert himself to resolve the differences between the views held by Bergson in his earlier works and in his mature work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. In the case of Aurobindo the author's difficulty was in making out what exactly was implied in some of

his mystical and less clear utterances.

In spite of the splendid work of the author, one rises from its study with the feeling that the interpretation has not gone far enough. A more careful re-interpretation in the light of their own inner logic would have brought the two thinkers much more closely together. Such a re-interpretation calls for a positive standpoint. Advaita Vedanta, which is the meeting ground of all partial philosophies, would have furnished such a standpoint. From two statements on pages 179 and 180 we have reason to think that the author was not unaware of such a standpoint. On page 179 he writes: 'Reality plunges itself into ignorance and thereby matter is created. As ignorance can be dispelled with the attainment of knowledge, so the material bondage could have been dispelled with the spirit realizing its own nature.' On page 180 is given the following quotation from Bergson's mature work, which is powerfully reminiscent of a statement in the *Mundaka-upanishad*: *'Then comes a boundless joy, an all-absorbing ecstasy or an enthralling rapture: God is there and the soul is in God. Mystery is no more. Problems vanish, darkness is dispelled, everything is flooded with light.'*

One could wish that the author had applied the standpoint implicit in the two statements given above in a more consistent manner and brought the two authors more closely together.

The book is nevertheless worth reading.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

PRAMANALAKSANAM: BY SARVAJNATMAMUNI, EDITED BY E. EASWARAN NAMPOOTHIRY, published by the University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1973, Pages xlii+74, Price Rs. 7.50.

Sarvajnatmamuni, the celebrated author of *Sankshepa-sarirakam*, a classic of Advaita Vedanta, is also the author of a small book on epistemology, *Pramana-lakshanam*. In the present text, with all his advaitic leanings, he presents a brief exposition of the six *pramanas* accepted by Jaimini and Kumarila in Purva-mimamsa. First he defines *pramana*. Then in the style of the earlier Naiyayikas he takes up the *pramanas* one by one. Dealing with *pratyaksha*, he places *nirvikalpa-pratyaksha* at a lower level. This is contrary to the later advaitic theory. *Pratyaksha* and *anumana* are examined and explained in greater detail. They cover 31 pages and the remaining 13 pages are given to the other *pramanas*. The portion dealing with *arthapatti* is missing in the text.

The editor's introduction is scholarly. He rightly rejects the equation of Devesvara with Suresvara. Establishing the identity of Manukuladitya, he places Sarvajnatman in tenth century Kerala. The editor is apparently under the impression that Mandana came after Kumarila and Prabhakara, and that Mandana supported Kumarila's views. One has only to look into *Sphota-siddhi* to find the divergence. In spite of the editor, Kumarila did not come from Kerala, for he was an Andhran and his nephew was Dharmakirti.

Fourteen pages of notes are given here and they are really helpful. The view found on page 33 is ascribed by the editor to Dharmakirti, while in reality the quotation comes from Dinnaga. The book is a valuable addition to our knowledge of Indian Philosophy.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND RAMAKRISHNA MATH

FOR APRIL, 1971—MARCH, 1972

(With some later information)

[We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in September 1973 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, P.O., District Howrah, West Bengal 711-202, India.—*Ed.*]

The Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the

monks of the Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at the Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to social betterment. This distinction should be borne in mind, though the 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is controlled by the central organization at Belur.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

Though the year under review was a bit peaceful on the whole, compared with the preceding three years, the organization had to take upon its shoulders the heavy burden of relief operations, mainly for the evacuees from the erstwhile East Pakistan as also for their rehabilitation in the newborn Bangladesh.

The new constructions during 1971-72 comprised the two-stored Dispensary building at Allahabad, a new Operation Theatre Block at Varanasi Sevashrama, the addition of a storey to the hostel building at Chandigarh, and the installation of a beautiful 12 ft. bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda at the Gateway of India by the Bombay Ashrama. At Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, the works of land acquisition and construction were in progress.

The effort to purchase a portion of Swamiji's ancestral home is still continuing; but as this entails prolonged litigation, the Mission has approached the West Bengal Government for the compulsory acquisition of five plots, including the one where Swamiji was born, as also the two plots involved in private negotiation.

During the year under review, a new educational centre was opened by the Mission at Narottam Nagar in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Owing to the abnormal situation in the erstwhile East Pakistan, our Centres there had to be closed down, and the monks stationed be recalled to India. However, soon after the emergence of independent Bangladesh, most of the centres have been revived, relief and rehabilitation being their main activities.

The Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, our only Centre in Burma, was managed as before by some local friends, constituted into a Managing Committee by the Headquarters.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1972, 118 branch centres in all, of which 54 were Mission centres, 20 combined Math and Mission centres, and 44 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Burma, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America; and the remaining 46 Mission centres, 15 combined Math and Mission centres and 26 Math centres (87 in all) in India. The Indian Centres were distributed as follows: 29 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 12 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, five in Kerala, four in Mysore, three each in Orissa and Assam, two each in Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Andhra and Arunachal Pradesh, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: The Math and Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Typical of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1971-72 there were altogether 11 full-fledged Indoor Hospitals with 1,398 beds which accommodated 31,405 patients and 66 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 43,15,351 cases including the old ones. Besides, the Centres at Salem, Bombay, Kanpur, New Delhi etc. had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 458 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. The last mentioned had also a department of Psychiatry.

Educational Work: The twin organizations ran during the period five Degree Colleges of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Belur (Howrah), Coimbatore, and Narendrapur (24 parganas) with 4,413 students on their rolls. The last three were residential. In addition, there were two B.T. Colleges at Belur and Coimbatore with 268 students, two Basic Training Schools at Coimbatore and Madras with 193 students, one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 99 students, four Junior Basic Training Colleges at Rahara, Sarisha, Sargachhi with 299 students, a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education and a School of Agriculture with 122, 147 and 138 students respectively at Coimbatore, one Gram Sevak Training Centre at Narendrapur with 98 trainees, four Engineering Schools at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,300 students, 13 Junior Technical or Industrial Schools with 642 boys and 24 girls, 83 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 8,225 boys and 5,465 girls (the Students' Homes in East Pakistan were closed during the period), two Chatushpathis with 10 students, 14 Multi-purpose Higher Secondary Schools with 8,270 boys and 429 girls, Nine Higher Secondary Schools with 3,235 boys and 1,926 girls, 15 High and Secondary Schools with 8,495 boys and 5,250 girls, 34 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,494 boys and 4,717 girls (the schools in East Pakistan remained closed), 49 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 7,220 boys and 2,579 girls, and 112 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 5,528 boys and 4,516 girls. The Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Math Hospital at Trivandrum trained nurses and midwives, the number of trainees being 22. Besides these, the Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a Day Hostel for 100 students, and a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages with 1,077 students. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy with 95 blind students, and the Centres in Raipur and Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a 'Panchayat Raj Training Centre' and a training centre in farming (Divyayan) respectively. The Centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 24 students. Thus there were altogether 52,641 boys and 17,696 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, and Mauritius.

Recreational Activities: Some of the Math and Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities to youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the Youth Section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities.

Work for Women: The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha (24 Pargs.) and the two Training Schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are special arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools, and some institutions are conducted especially for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes: The Math and Mission have all along tried best to serve their unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Sargachhi. Along and Narottam Nagar (Arunachal Pradesh), Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural subcentres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Tiruvalla, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a youth training centre in Ranchi, meant for local Adivasis. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Kukis and Mizos by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational and cultural activities in the Arunachal region are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organization ran in the rural and backward areas seven Multi-purpose Higher Secondary Schools, two High Schools, 45 Senior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 42 Primary Schools, 48 night Schools for adults, seven Vocational Training Centres —with a total of 13,447 students. The organization also conducted 12 Outdoor Dispensaries with a total of 2,44,049 patients, besides running 125 Milk-distribution centres—all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities,

preaching and educative tours with magic lanterns, movie-films and such other means were also undertaken frequently. For the labouring classes in the industrial areas, the Mission conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

Mass Contact: From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. It will be wrong again to suppose that the organization has no real contact with the masses. As a matter of fact, the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where millions get free medicines, and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also, a considerable number of poor students get free education, board or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres sometimes sell booklets at nominal price, to suit the pockets of the masses.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The Centres established real points of contact between people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. They also conducted Libraries and Reading Rooms. Two Sanskrit Chatushpathis, too, were run. At least ten Centres published books on religious subjects and nine journals in different languages. The Math Centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihsreyasananda in South Africa, Rhodesia, and East Africa, with Salisbury (35, Rhodes Avenue) as his centre.

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: As usual the Mission undertook some relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves. Under the first head may be mentioned the *East Bengal Evacuee Relief* in co-operation with the branch centres at Narendrapur, Shillong, Cherrapunji, Sarada Pitha (Belur), Katihar, Malda, Silchar, Karimganj, Purulia and Jalpaiguri; *Flood Relief* in West Bengal and Bihar with the assistance of the branch centres at Narendrapur, Malda, Sargachhi, Contai, Rahara, Manasadwip, Katihar and Patna; and *Cyclone Relief* in Orissa with the assistance of Bhubaneswar Centre. Under the second head come the relief and rehabilitation operations carried out by the Mission centre at Purulia and the Math Centre at Rajkot. The details of these will be found elsewhere.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and Mission Centres ceremonially observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers, including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and Mission. In co-operation with the local public, some Centres celebrate the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, falls on Sunday, 16 December 1973.

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

VOLUME LXXVIII

JANUARY—DECEMBER 1973

By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained

EDITORIAL OFFICE
P.O. MAYAVATI, VIA LOHAGHAT
DT. PITHORAGARH, U.P.

PUBLICATION OFFICE
5, DEHI ENTALLY ROAD
CALCUTTA 700-014

Foreign : One Pound, U.S.A. : Four Dollars

Annual Subscription : India, Nepal, Bangla Desh and Ceylon : Rupees Eight

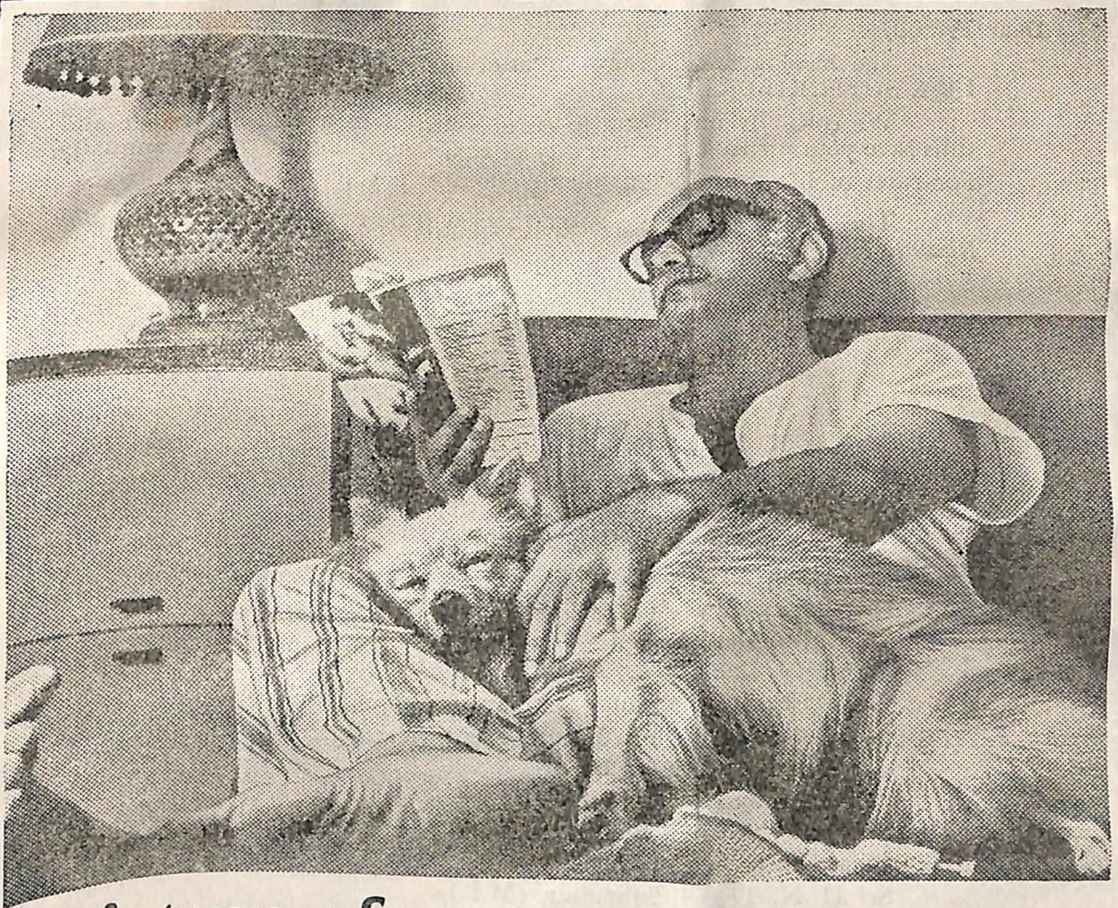
Single Copy : Inland : Seventy-five Paise

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOLUME LXXVIII, JANUARY—DECEMBER 1973

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MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

AN APPEAL

The Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati belonging to the Ramakrishna Order was started in 1899 under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda in the deep Himalayan regions near the northern frontier of India. The Mayavati Charitable Hospital forms a part of the Ashrama activities. It came into being as a small dispensary in 1903 in response to the crying need of the very poor villagers in neighbouring villages. Since then it has spontaneously grown through the years into a small well-equipped rural hospital of 23 beds, serving the needs of nearly 1300 villages within 20 miles radius. People come here for treatment from further distances also.

One unique feature of this hospital is that here patients get treatment and medicine completely free of charges of any kind.

Chart of Number of Patients treated during last five years :

Year	*Outdoor*	*Indoor*
1968	19,756	729
1969	22,503	684
1970	21,367	438
1971	20,002	415
1972	21,696	579

What a great artist wrote about this small hospital long ago :

'Saw the Mayavati Ashrama hospital—a veritable river of love and compassion on the mighty bosom of the Himalayas, indrawn and steeped in meditation—and was filled with admiration.'

NANDALAL BASU—A PILGRIM
Shantiniketan
26.6.1942 Birbhum

To meet the increasing demand on its services the hospital needs more money. We appeal to generous-hearted people who feel for the suffering poor to make liberal donations. The hospital can be greatly helped by making endowments.

All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged. Crossed cheques and drafts may kindly be issued in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital* and sent *only by registered post to :* The President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P.O. Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., India. *Donations are exempted from Income-tax in the hands of the donors, according to section* 80-G *of Indian Income-tax Act*, 1961, *vide I.T. Case No.* 11-029-AY-3086 / CAL/RC (A).

1st October 1973

Swami Budhananda
PRESIDENT

Editor : SWAMI BUDHANANDA, Joint Editor : SWAMI TADRUPANANDA
Printed by SWAMI SMARANANANDA at General Printers & Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., 119 Dharamtolla St., Cal. 13 and Published by him for Advaita Ashrama (Mayavati) from 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700014 *on December 1, 1973.*
Cover & Art Plates Printed by Sun Lithographing Co., Calcutta 10

Phone : 44-2898 Registered No. C - 3780

Annual Subscription : India, Burma and Ceylon - Rupees Eight, U. S. A. - Four Dollars,
Other countries £ 1·00, Single Copy : Inland - 75 P.